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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate student responses to a developmental writing instructor's feedback on their writing assignments in college-preparatory writing courses at a community college. Using observation, analysis of teacher responses on a writing assignment, surveys, and interviews, the research investigated how students interpreted instructor feedback, and whether students applied that feedback to their writing. The population of the study was 45 students from two sections of college preparatory writing, both of which were taught by the same instructor. The study consisted of four parts: (1) Analysis of feedback made by instructor on writing assignments; (2) Classroom observation; (3) Survey of students and instructor, using open-ended questions; and (4) Interviews with 13 students and instructor. The author argues that the study results indicate pedagogical hegemony is an impossibility, even though it is an ideal toward which the instructor is forced to strive. Students reacted differently to the same kinds of responses from the instructor. The study did find that, overall, students preferred oral responses to written. The author also argues that a coherent feedback policy is imperative, even though the student need not understand the procedure. The point system and grades did not seem to correspond to the basic premise of portfolio assessment. Research instruments appended. (Contains 72 references.) (NB)

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ED 480 197

A CASE STUDY OF DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING STUDENTS' INTERPRETATION OF AND RESPONSE TO INSTRUCTOR'S FEEDBACK ON THEIR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

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by

NICHOLAS J. BEKAS
B.A. University of South Florida, 1991
M.A. University of South Florida, 1994

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Educational Research, Technology and Leadership
in the College of Education
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

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ABSTRACT

This purpose of this study was to investigate student responses to a developmental writing instructor's feedback on their writing assignments in college-preparatory writing course at a community college. Using observation, analysis of teacher responses on a writing assignment, surveys, and interviews, the research investigated how students interpreted instructor feedback and whether students applied that feedback to improving their writing.

The population of this study was 45 students from two sections of college preparatory writing. Both sections were taught by the same instructor. The first part of the study involved an analysis of the feedback made by the instructor on student writing assignments. The teacher's feedback was categorized by type and analyzed for trends in response.

The second part of the study involved classroom observation. The researcher observed both classes for a semester. The purpose of the observation was to record teaching practices related to the teacher's feedback practices. By observing the class, the researcher was able to analyze and record the instructor's teaching practices as they were related to her feedback on writing assignments. The researcher observed and recorded the interactions between the instructor and the students.

The third part of the study involved a survey of students and the instructor. The students were given an open-question format survey about the types of feedback used by their instructor. Students were asked to give examples of effective and

ineffective feedback. The instructor was asked a series of open-ended question about her feedback practices. The results of the students' surveys were analyzed for trends in students' reactions to the instructor's feedback. The student survey indicated a mixed response to the instructor's feedback methodology. The results of both surveys were used to prepare interview questions for the students and the instructor.

The final part of the study involved interviews of thirteen students and the instructor. The student interviews revealed why students do not respond to certain types of teacher feedback. The instructor interview offered insights into how an instructor developed and applied feedback strategies in college-preparatory writing class. The interviews allowed the students to explain in greater detail how they reacted and interpreted feedback

The results of the study indicated that interpretation of feedback by students is a complex, dynamic process that does not give a consistent answer to how all students will respond to instructor feedback on their writing assignments. The research indicated that oral feedback is the most effective method for students. However, this method was not used extensively be the instructor. The study also showed that traditional methods of feedback such as numeric grades, and editing and proofreading symbols were not used viewed by students as helpful. The most interesting outcome was students having both a negative and a positive response to the same instance of instructor feedback. A major outcome of this research was that using one method of feedback for all students was ineffective.

For Arianna Marie, my beautiful daughter, may you also know the jouissance of learning that has so enriched your father's life.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY 1
Background and Significance 1
Purpose of the Study 6
Research Questions 6
Assumptions 7
Limitations of the Study 7
Definition of Terms 8
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE 9
Overview of the Factors Influencing the Growth of Developmental Education 9
Research in Grading Practices of Writing Instructors 17
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PROCEDURE 28
Design 28
Setting 30
Population 32
Methodology 34
Observation 34
Analysis of Writing Assignments 34
Instruments 36
Instructor Survey 36
Student Survey 37
Student Interviews 38
Data Collection 38
Data Analysis 40
Criteria 42
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS 44
Research Question 1 46
Research Question 2 52
Research Question 3 58
Research Question 4 62
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 64
Introduction 64
Feedback in the Developmental Education Classroom 65
Regrounding Feedback 71
Conclusion 77
Areas for Further Research 80
APPENDIX A: Student Survey 82
APPENDIX B: Instructor's Grading Rubric 88
APPENDIX C: Instructor's Error Checklist 90
APPENDIX D: Instructor's Syllabus 92
APPENDIX E: Student Permission Form 97

APPENDIX F: IRB Permission for Study 100
LIST OF REFERENCES 102

CHAPTER 1: NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Background and Significance

Developmental education courses are not a new phenomenon and have been a part of community colleges for a good part of their history primarily because of the open door policy (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The open-door policy means no criteria other than a high school diploma or its equivalency are required to gain admission to a community college. Developmental education is radically different today than when community colleges came into existence primarily because access to and the importance of higher education has changed since World War II. However, the 1965 Higher Education Act marked a clear beginning in the growth of remedial programs in community colleges (Roueche & Roueche, 1993). Community colleges have always served students who, for various reasons, choose not to attend a 4-year college or university. A majority of these students have been mandated into college preparatory courses. In 1968, John Roueche published a study of remedial education and evaluated the research concerning the effectiveness of developmental education program negatively. He said, "There is a paucity of research on the efficacy of remedial programs in the junior college. Indeed, with few exceptions, community college neither describe nor evaluate their endeavors in this critical area" (Roueche, *Salvage, Redirection, or Custody*, p. 78). Roueche made the argument that community colleges must offer more effective programs for developmental education

students if they were to receive support for such programs. Thirty years later, in 1999, Roueche co-authored another report about developmental education and stated, "To date, there is little evidence that community colleges have stepped up to the task" of providing quality developmental education programs to meet the remedial needs of the communities they serve (*High Stakes, High Performance*, p. 55). In Roueche's estimation, little has changed since his first report in 1968 due to the deficiency in research describing successful developmental education programs. Because developmental education has not supported with research its claims of offering quality education, critics of developmental education continue to debate the efficacy of offering developmental courses in the community college (Roueche and Roueche, 1993).

In Florida and other states, a backlash against the growing number of developmental students has taken place in the form of legislative action mandating exit requirements for developmental programs (State of Florida, Section 240.117 (4)(A), 1997). The increased focus on competency tests and other exit criteria are signals of the need for increased research into developmental programs that effectively remediate students (West, 1993). However, most research has only focused on reporting course and program outcomes and demographics of student and teacher populations; little substantive research has been conducted on classroom practices and interactions between teachers and students, especially on the impact these areas have on student performance and retention. In order to improve retention and performance, research into, and evaluation of, developmental education much

take a broader focus than its current narrow focus on outcome assessment (Boylan, 1999; *Raising the Bar*, 1999; Serban and Burke, 1998).

One area of developmental education which has been studied is writing. However, an area of developmental writing instruction that has not been studied adequately is teacher feedback. Many scholars of developmental writing like Sommers (1981); Shaugnessy (1977); Pearl (1979); Elbow (1993); Zinn (1998); and Tchudi (1997), have identified teacher feedback as one of the most important factors affecting the writing performance of students (Zinn, 1998). However, most research in this area focused on outcomes rather than the interrelationships between students and teachers in the classroom. In a 1993 study, Connors and Lunsford concluded by stating, "What we would like to see are future studies that would build the context of teacher response in describing in detail the topography we have only sketched in here, perhaps in 'thick description' of teacher-responders at work, in their full context"(p. 219). Because this study seeks to do more than count types of errors and measure outcomes, it fills a gap in the research on developmental writing.

With a movement towards performance-based funding at the community college, successful persistence and completion of developmental courses plays an increasing role in the evaluation of instruction in Florida community colleges (Holcombe, 1997). According to Peter Ewell (1991), in order to meet the challenge of performance-based funding, more effective and meaningful assessment must take place. Ewell defined effective research as studies that described classroom practices that had an impact on student learning. He characterized in effective research as

3

studies that simply reported on statistical outcomes of courses and programs. Ewell believes research must begin to focus on the interactions between students and teachers in order to distinguish between ineffective and effective methods of instruction. Pierson and Huba (1997) found that instruction in developmental education must be evaluated more effectively because the whole purpose of developmental education is to help students acquire the necessary skills to be successful in college. An editorial in Change entitled, "Raising the Bar in Developmental Education," identified the lack of research into effective teaching practices as one of the problems with developmental education in community colleges (1999). The authors stated, "No data capture the relationship between content and consequences in remedial education" (p. 59). Research on developmental education in community colleges focuses on outcomes or on student demographics, but focusing on outcomes or demographics cannot help to gauge the effectiveness of instruction because such research does not explain students' successes or failures in developmental classes. Because "remediation lengthens the time it takes to earn an undergraduate degree, adding cost and promoting aimless academic drift," it is imperative that student performance and retention improve (Manno, 1996; Boylan, 1999).

This study is also significant because it provides formative rather than summative research on teacher feedback. Unlike summative assessment, which provides evidence of specific outcomes of student learning, formative research seeks to provide insight into the "quality of student learning" (Cross & Angelo, 1993, p. 4).

In terms of composition, a focus on formative assessment was important because most research only focused on outcomes (Dohrer, 1991). It is important to focus on the processes of feedback because it is in these processes that instructors give attention "to the social positions, multiple voices, conscious and unconscious pleasures, tensions, desires and contradictions which are present in all historical contexts" (Orner, 1992, p. 79). Formative assessment provides a means for studying how instruction impacts the student. Ketter and Hunter (1997) defined assessment of writing "as feedback intended to shape a student's performance to meet clearly established and expressed criteria" (p. 104). However, research reviewed for the purpose of this study did not focus on providing insights into how feedback shaped student's performance. Rather the research focused on categorizing teacher feedback or student attitudes to teacher feedback. Thus, this study focused on an important area that has not been researched thoroughly.

According to Boylan (1999), in order to improve the effectiveness of instruction, the impact of instructor feedback must be studied in greater detail. The goal of this dissertation was to increase the effectiveness of teacher feedback by analyzing the types of feedback students find most helpful. (For the purposes of this study, the word feedback will be used to refer to all forms of teacher grading, evaluation, and assessment.) Because teacher feedback is one of the primary methods used to teach students to write, it has an enormous impact on a student's progress in developmental writing classes. If students are unable to understand teacher feedback and use it to improve their writing skills, then it will be more difficult for them to pass

basic writing courses (Shaugnessy, 1977; Lu, 1987; Lu, 1992). Thus, it is essential to find out what type of feedback is most useful to developmental writing students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to observe and analyze the impact of a writing instructor's grading practices on students' writing performance. In addition, developing suggestions for improvement of teacher feedback on writing assignments was also a focus of this study.

Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

1. What types of teacher feedback were most effective in helping students to improve their writing?
2. What types of teacher feedback on writing assignments were ineffective for developmental writing students?
3. How did developmental writing students use teacher feedback to improve their writing skills?
4. How did a college preparatory writing instructor at Valencia Community College help students understand feedback on writing assignments?

Assumptions

1. The students in this study in ENC 0012 were representative of students in developmental writing classes at Valencia Community College-West Campus.
2. Students would not use teacher feedback to improve their writing skills
3. Students would only be interested in an alpha-numeric grade.
4. Students would not understand the instructor's feedback symbols and comments.
5. The instructor would not provide adequate explanation of her grading practices to students.
6. The instructor's feedback would primarily focus on identifying errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Limitations of the Study

1. Because the study was conducted as a case study, the number of subjects was limited. Only the one instructor and two sections of the instructor's classes participated in the study. Thus, the results of the study might not extend to other sections of college preparatory-writing classes at other community colleges.
2. The teaching philosophy and practices of the instructor may not be the same as other instructors at Valencia Community College and at other community

colleges. Consequently, the results of the study can be attributed to the teaching methodology of the participating instructor.

3. The students in the study may not be representative of other institutions; therefore, the conclusions reached in this study may not be generalized to populations at other community colleges.

Definition of Terms

Definitions for this study were the following:

1. Developmental courses - - Courses in reading and writing whose purpose is to develop the students' skills to the college level.

2. Feedback - - Any symbol, comment, or grade assigned to students' writing by the instructor.

3. Developmental education - - Programs in a community college offering college preparatory courses in reading, writing, or mathematics.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Overview of the Factors Influencing the Growth of Developmental Education

Developmental education is not a new phenomena; it has been a part of community colleges since their conception (Cohen and Brawer, 1996; Roueche and Kirk, 1973). Prior to World War II (WWII), developmental education primarily focused on students who, despite having graduated from high school after taking a college-preparatory curriculum, were not quite ready for a four-year college or university (Brint and Karabel, 1989). After WWII, community college education changed drastically. Student attendance dramatically increased as awareness of the need for an educated population grew (Brubaker, 1968; Roche, 1994). However, colleges and universities were not prepared to handle the massive influx of new students, nor were they equipped to handle the large numbers of students who were not ready for college-level work. Even though community colleges were the logical choice for taking on the task of providing students with the necessary academic skills in reading writing, and mathematics because of their open-door policy, it took two decades of legal and social changes before developmental education became a common part of the community college mission (Roueche and Roueche, 1993).

The enormous presence of developmental education in community colleges had its beginnings in the growing role of the Federal government. The Federal

government became involved in higher education after Word War II because the American people and the U.S. government were eager to compensate their returning servicemen. The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, which offered veterans a free education and a monthly stipend, was the beginning of the expansion of higher education. According to Cohen (1998), it was "the Serviceman's Readjustment Act ushered in the mass higher education era." (p. 182). By 1947, colleges and universities were attempting to educate 2.5 million students (Roche, 1994, p. 31). The Serviceman's Readjustment Act was just the beginning of new legislation for veterans that would influence an ongoing tradition. This act was followed by Public Law 550 of 1950, which awarded the Korean veterans the same level of expanded compensation. The Serviceman's Readjustment Act represented the largest scholarship grant in the history of the U.S., and the urgency of providing for the veterans placed considerable logistical demands on colleges and universities. These logistical demands helped to funnel students to community colleges increasing the importance of the role of community colleges in the U.S. higher educational system.

Another important Federal involvement that expanded higher education occurred in 1946 when President Truman's Commission on Higher Education mandated the nation's development of community colleges. The Truman commission called for cost effective education for America's expanding middle class. The Commission stipulated that education through the 14th grade was a necessity, and that 49% of all Americans were capable of the first two years of higher education. While not all of the points made in the report became laws or common practice, the

Commission's report did aid in the growth of the community college throughout the nation by giving community colleges the incentive to develop strong national networks (Gross, 1964).

Because the Commission's report viewed community colleges' development favorably, community college leaders were motivated to press for an increase in the role community colleges played in higher education, but there was still debate about what that role should be. George Zook, who had written widely on the community college and chaired the Commission, said the role of the community college was "to serve as a sieve for the minority that was capable of transferring to a four-year institution, and to provide terminal vocation for the remainder" (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 68.). While not all community college supporters agreed with Zook's narrow vision, it did influence the Truman Commission report on higher education which called for equality of educational opportunity and the expansion of higher education (Witt et al, 1994).

The Commission recommended that community colleges should focus on providing terminal vocational education believing that "the economy would require an ever-increasing amount of semi-professional workers" (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 70). By stating that community colleges would not just be the first two years of a university education, but they would also offer a "wide variety of terminal, semiprofessional, public service, and recreational programs to fulfill local needs and to serve citizens of every age, race, and social class, the Commission helped legitimize the presence of community colleges" (Witt et al., p. 131). The

legitimation of community colleges by the Truman Report, and the ensuing debate about expanding the role of community colleges in accomplishing the goals set forth by the Report helped to spur the community college's role in developmental education. The Truman Commission Report's emphasis on "equal educational opportunity for all" spurred the growth of community colleges and helped to pave the way for the growth of developmental education in the 1960s and 1970s.

Several important legal changes impacted American society and led to the growth of developmental education in community colleges. In 1954, the Supreme Court decision, Brown v. the School Board of Topeka, Kansas, changed the course of education and the role of community colleges greatly. By affording equal educational rights to African-Americans, the student population at community colleges would be changed forever. This decision would also provide an impetus to change access for other minorities and women.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 also impacted community college developmental education programs because it stated that no person would be discriminated against in any program including education and the acquisition of financial assistance. This Act allowed access to higher education for a greater segment of the population and was important because:

> (It) brought together the strands of the desegregation effort by authorizing federal power to be brought to bear on the right of all people to vote, use public facilities, and gain jobs according to their ability. It also supported colleges and schools in providing in-service training designed to assist staff in dealing with problems caused by desegregation (Cohen, 1998, p. 184).

Perhaps the greatest impact on the community college has been the resultant diversification of students that resulted from the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Teachers were forced to abandon scholarly isolationism and community college administrators were forced to develop financial aid and counseling resources to meet the new needs of these students. As the 1960's continued, President Johnson tried to create a "Great Society." To assist in achievement of this goal, Johnson, in 1965, made education spending a top priority. His statement "every child has the right to as much education he has the ability to receive," helped to gain support for the Higher Education Act of 1965 (Cohen, 1998, p. 190). The Act provided grants for different college services like libraries and undergraduate programs, but most importantly it provided funding for guaranteed student loans (Cohen, 1998). The financial aid provision of this act which authorized guaranteed student loans was intended to give every American an opportunity to receive a post-secondary education. However, universities and colleges could not meet the demands of increasing numbers of students, so community colleges collected the "run off" (Vaughan, 1983). Although community colleges did not receive as much funding as universities, these acts still had an impact on community colleges and their involvement with developmental education.

The community college's efforts to receive equitable funding characterized the problems community colleges faced throughout their history. Community colleges have occupied a liminal space between two established institutions secondary schools and universities and have been disparaged for being too like high schools and too unlike universities. Even though this plight has affected community college attempts

to seek increased federal funding, it did not affect the growth in community college and in developmental education. "By the late 1960's, the junior college's share of total higher education enrollment had risen to nearly three in ten, up from one in six in 1955" (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 84). A large part of this growth was in developmental education (Roueche, 1968).

The large number of under-prepared students who began to enter the community colleges as a result of the economic, legal, and social changes in the 1960s spurred a growth in developmental education studies and research (Roueche and Kirk, 1973). Developmental education since the 1960s has been criticized for being ineffective by groups from within community colleges family and from outside groups (Cohen and Brawer, 1996; Roueche and Roueche, 1999). The number of students requiring remediation at the college level has grown, but the methods of teaching those students and the effectiveness of developmental education programs have not changed (Roueche and Roueche, 1999). Because of this growth, community colleges have had to strengthen their role in developmental education by adapting to the continuous and often disconcerting changes in American society. This has not been an easy task and has presented challenges to conducting research. Because of the continuous nature of the change in student populations, most research in developmental education has focused on quantitative analysis of outcomes. Despite a proliferation of outcome analysis, little nationwide improvement in developmental education programs has been statistically confirmed (Roueche and Roueche, 1999; McCabe, 2000).

Despite the lack of improvement nationwide, developmental education still plays an important role in our higher education system because of shifts in the nature and structure of the United States' economy and society; these shifts have placed a premium on highly trained workers (McCabe, 2000). However, students are still not graduating from high school with the academic skills necessary to perform in the changed workplace (McCabe, 2000; Roueche and Roueche, 1993). Thus, even though about 47% of high school students take a college preparatory curriculum – a 30% percent increase over the last decade – only 48% of high school students are ready for college-level work (McCabe, 2000). More students may be ready for college than ever before, but there are many more who are not.

An additional impact on developmental education has been the changing population of the United States educational system (Cohen and Brawer, 1993; McCabe, 2000). A larger minority population in public schools has resulted in a larger population of developmental students in community colleges because the public school system has not been able to successfully prepare these populations for college-level work (McCabe, 2000; Roueche and Roueche, 1993, 1999). Even if the public school system can adequately prepare all its graduating students for college, there will still be a large population of GED students, English as a Second Language students, and students returning to school years after graduating from high school who require developmental education courses.

The Supreme Court Decision of 1954 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 initiated a change in access to community colleges and helped to change the

demographics of students attending community colleges. However, with the passing of the Higher Education Act of 1972, open access to and diverse student populations became a permanent part of community colleges. Title IX of this act allowed the federal government to withhold funding to colleges and universities that discriminated along race, ethnic, or gender lines. Basically, Title IX gave the federal government the teeth to enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by banning sexual and racial discrimination in all educational activities. The passage of this Act led to affirmative action programs being established in higher education institutions across the country. These programs changed the demographics of faculty and staff in community colleges across the country. In addition, Title IX also led to changes in higher education curricula because the "new" student and faculty presence called for changes that would reflect their experiences more accurately. According to Cohen (1989), "The Federal government now seemed to be the champion for social justice . . . " (p. 185). The increased role of the Federal government would have the greatest impact on community colleges because they became the place where most of this new population of students would go to for access to higher education. Because open access is the universal entrance criteria for community colleges, they were, and are, the natural place for developmental education programs to meet the needs of the new population of students experiencing higher education for the first time.

Research in Grading Practices of Writing Instructors

Unless equal access is going to end, community colleges must begin to focus on finding solutions to the problems of retention and performance of developmental education students by refocusing research on the classroom interactions of teachers and students. Angelo and Cross (1993) argued that there is gap between what is taught and what is learned, and this gap reveals that instruction is not as effective as it can be. Teachers have always been certain of what they know, yet that certainty diminishes when it comes to "knowing" what students know.

Assessment has been and probably will always be a bane for teachers. With state legislative moves towards increased accountability, assessment is becoming more problematic (Manno, 1995). The problem is that many teachers only assess student assignments terminally by giving an alpha-numeric grade. Supposedly a grade should be a point of departure for learning, but we know this is not the case. A grade does not always reflect prior learning, nor does it predict new learning. If assessment is going to aid learning, then assessment practices must change. Angelo and Cross (1993) believe that assessment should be a continuous process used by an instructor to evaluate learning and classroom practice. Cross (1993) stated, "Because we require our students to develop and demonstrate abilities incorporating their knowledge, we need to re-examine continually their learning processes and our teaching" (p. 7). Vaughan (1991) argued for a change in the climate surrounding

research and scholarship at the community college, believing that both should be an integral part of every institution.

However, the call for more thorough research into classroom practice has not been answered by developmental education teachers or researchers, especially concerning developmental writing. According to Wambach and Brothen (2000), research on developmental education students has been fragmented and focused on a deficit model. A deficit model fails to account for students strengths and does not acknowledge students' "alternative ways of being in the world" (Lundell and Collins, 1999, p. 18). Most developmental writing instructors are either ignorant of or reluctant to implement assessment practices in the classroom which focus on the perspective of the student. Primarily, this is because the research and theory in developmental education have focused on explaining students' problems from the viewpoint of the instructor or the researcher. Unless research and scholarship begins to focus on students, it is unlikely that instruction in developmental education will change, especially in developmental writing courses (Wambach and Brothen, 2000).

According to Mina Shaugnessy, "Little has been said . . . about the ways in which BW (Basic Writing) students can be expected to improve nor about the responsibilities of teachers and institutions in bringing about this improvement" (1977, p. 275). The impetus for my research is the scarcity of studies focusing on college-level remedial writers and their teachers' grading practices. Grading and annotating essays is still the primary method of assessing a student's academic progress (Tchudi 1997). Because grades have long been a problem given their

reliance on the dynamics of teacher interaction with both students and their essays, it is amazing that more research has not been conducted in this area. Stephen Tchudi (1997) pointed out that too often teachers think a terminal grade on a paper is an evaluative assessment. Many writing assignments are only graded upon completion especially in non-composition courses where instructors are focused on "teaching their subject." The grade is an assessment, but it is not evaluative because it does not give the student the opportunity to self evaluate their writing meaningfully. Thus, if students do not understand and or trust the grading practices of teachers, they will be less able to improve their writing skills (White, 1994; Zinn, 1998).

Hugh Mearns (1929), in discussing education and grading, said, "One learns early in life that the expressing of ones' unique individuality does not pay" (p. 25). This comment characterizes the way many students feel about composition. There has always been an inherent contradiction in the way composition has been taught to freshmen college students. On the one hand, the power of creativity is glorified and used as an exemplar by writing teachers when they use essays and literature to discuss writing. On the other hand, students are chastised, or more importantly "graded down," when they try to write like those exemplars. Writing teachers have developed an "unwritten cannon" for grading text, and this canon is exclusionary (Sommers, 1982). Lynch and Klyman (1978) found that teachers have never tried to find out what their students think about this "unwritten canon." Most students find teachers' comments and symbols to be useless. (Lynch & Klyman, 1978; Straub 1997; Zinn , 1998; Angelova & Riazantseva 1999).

In a 1930 article in College English, Luella Cole Pressey reported on a study she conducted in order to discover the weakest skills of freshman composition students. Pressey's study, although conducted in 1929, would probably raise nods of affirmation among composition instructors today. Her list of skills focused on surface errors like spelling and punctuation and argued that such errors should be the focus of teacher grading. Error analysis is still the primary focus of grading, but no research has found that such a focus helps to improve students' writing (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981; Hillocks, 1982; Shaugnessy, 1977; Odell, 1973; Onore, 1989). Composition instructors have been focusing on error analysis for a long time, but that focus has not produced any significant improvement in the teaching of writing (Murray 1982). Teachers know what skills need to be taught and have a plethora of methods to teach those skills, but students often still struggle with writing and find grades do not help them understand how to improve their writing (Kline, 1976; Connors and Lunsford, 1993; Mitchell, 1994).

Teachers' focus on surface errors only can also alienate students. As Nancy Sommers (1982) pointed out, "Teacher's comments can take students' attention away from their own purpose in writing a particular text and focus that attention on the teachers' purpose in commenting" (p. 149). Many students do not see the purpose of composition classes because the responses to their writing focus only on assessment, a grade, and not on the content of their essays. Many teachers complain about students' obsessive attention to grades without realizing that teachers' comments have programmed students to focus on the grade. Nancy Sommers (1982) in her seminal

essay, "Responding to Student Writing," wrote, "More than any other enterprise in the teaching of writing, responding to and commenting on student writing consumes the largest proportion of our time" (p. 148).

The question, which still has not been answered, is "Why do many students find teacher feedback useless?" Studies have shown that it is not because students do not understand what the comments and symbols mean (Green, 1995). Bryan Bardine (1999) found that "(s)tudents do understand the majority of comments (teachers) write on their paper, but often they have a difficult time seeing the response's importance for revision" (p. 241). In an important study of college basic writing students and teachers, Mina Shaughnessy's (1977) research showed that student failure was more a result of an expectation of failure among teachers of writing and not a result of a misunderstanding of teacher comments by students. Teachers' expectations of failure have an adverse effect on students because they lead teachers to only comment on surface level errors like punctuation and spelling; thus, students learn to focus less on developing ideas, which arrests their development as writers (Nold and Freedman, 1977; Onore, 1989).

Shaugnessy's study discussed a problem that has always plagued the field of composition. Teachers' focus on surface level errors gives students a false sense of the composition process. Sommers (1982), in her seminal study of teachers' responses to students writing, found, "The process of revising, editing, and proofreading are collapsed and reduced to a single trivial activity" (p. 151). When this reduction happened, students no longer developed their writing ability because

they were more afraid of committing errors than expressing their thoughts (Onore, 1989; Straub, 1997). The continuous marking of surface errors frustrates students for several reasons, but Sommers (1982) found that students were reluctant to make significant changes to their writing because they feared making more errors. Fear of making an error is inculcated in students throughout their academic life because teachers have focused on surface errors. As soon as students begin to write, teacher feedback to that writing focuses on correcting grammar, spelling, and punctuation without giving substantive feedback on parts of the writing process.

Focusing on surface errors developed from education's obsession with measurement. Writing teachers began to quantify writing by reducing writing to skills which could be measured (O'Hagan, 1997). Since it is difficult to reduce ideas to measurable criteria, teachers focused on spelling, punctuation, and grammar rules. Unfortunately, focusing on surface-level errors is not a new phenomenon. Although this focus did begin to change in the late 1970s and early 1980s, there has been a return to this focus due to the increase in competency tests mandated by states. In his study of types of teacher comments on students' papers, Dohrer (1991) found, "The majority of teachers' comments dealt with surface-level features, ranging from a low of 52 percent to a high of 80 percent, with a mean of 72 percent" (p. 53). "Moreover, the teachers' emphasis on surface changes was so strong that students willingly sacrificed information they had provided the reader; apparently they purged content to maintain the correctness they felt more important to their teachers" (Dohrer, 1991, p. 54). The focus on surface level errors has had an adverse affect on students

"because [students] only read the parts [of their essays] with comments, [and thus,] students did not establish clear, global concepts of their work" (Dohrer, 1991, p. 52). If students are only reading comments on surface-level errors, they are getting a skewed view of writing.

Research has also discovered that "students want more specific comments; comments that tell them how and not just why" (Bardine, 1999, p. 244). Of many students, teachers' symbols and remarks are often cryptic; they confuse more than they illuminate. Dohrer (1991) reported in his study that, "Students . . . seemed to be perplexed by comments such as 'awkward,' 'reword,' or 'rewrite'" (p. 55). However, even though teachers were aware that students did not understand how to use such comments to revise their writing, teachers did not clarify these comments or stop using them (Dohrer, 1991). Despite research showing students' willingness to revise and correct errors if teachers' comments on their papers were more explanatory, teachers' feedback still primarily focuses on students'surface-level errors (Dohrer, 1991; Moxley, 1992; McGann, 1997; Straub, 1997; Zinn, 1998; Bardine, 1999; Angelova & Riasantzeva, 1999). Hillocks (1982) found that when instructors' comments are more specific and descriptive, students are better able to understand their errors and to correct them. The problem is teachers do not make enough descriptive comments on student papers.

Jean Paul Sartre, in Search for a Method, wrote "Knowing is a moment of praxis opening into what has not yet been" (1963, p. 92). However, for most composition instructors, knowing has not been a moment of praxis. Knowing, an

understanding of students, has mostly been an act of remembering the expectations of their writing instructors and graduate professors. This remembering of past expectations closes off what might become. Writing instructors have taught writing based on their past experiences as students and as instructors. Because of this, most writing departments are a veritable cornucopia of grading ideologies, but they do have one thing in common: ineffectiveness (Siegel, 1982). In addition, if teachers only focus on surface level errors, then their students' moment of praxis is always going to be surface-level errors.

The problem with grading is not that it is based on multiple methodologies for teaching writing; multiple methods of instruction are a necessity in community college writing courses. However, multiple conceptions of grading can create problems such as student confusion over grades, poor student performance on writing exams, and miscommunication between students and instructors because there is no continuity between instructors (Ketter and Hunter, 1997; Sommers, 1982). Each instructor develops his or her own paradigm for evaluating writing, which creates discontinuity within the department (Olson and Torrance, 1983; Connors and Lunsford, 1993). Discontinuity is often viewed as a privilege by faculty, but it can create problems for students, especially when states require a common exam in writing. This discontinuity carries over to all students because writing classes at institutions are a community; in fact, they are a separate culture, albeit a fragmented one (Goto, 1999; Lu, 1994).

The disparity in teaching and evaluation makes it more difficult for students to be successfully complete writing classes (Connors and Lunsford, 1993, Sommers, 1982). Writing instructors create a fragmented field because they develop grading rubrics that are idiosyncratic and often are divorced from the experiences of their students (Mitchell, 1994). Part of the fragmentation stems from the roles created by grading practices, roles which restrict the students' ability to think critically about their writing (Mitchell 1994; Lu, 1994). This restriction of critical thinking leads to a stasis in a student's growth as a writer. As Dohrer pointed out, "Teachers took on the role of evaluators, and students became correctors" (1991, p. 57). In addition, writing instructors are isolated from their peers primarily because of their workloads; thus, very little dialogue occurs at the departmental level, and most of the dialogue about grading practices that does occur is contentious, and thus unproductive (Siegel, 1982; Connors and Lunsford, 1993).

Writing instructors understand the idea that any form of writing is dynamic, meaning it does not exist in the same way for every person, but rarely do they apply this idea to the practice of grading. In *Errors and Expectation*, Mina Shaugnessy wrote, "Definitions of proficiency in writing vary widely from school to school and from teacher to teacher . . . " (p. 276). However, writing instructors do not always apply this understanding to their grading methodology. They assume all students and teachers should have the same conception of "good" writing as they do, but most students and many teachers do not. Teachers need to stop assuming that students understand grading symbols and their intention (Bardine, 1999, p. 244). Therefore, it

is incumbent upon the instructor to create inter-subjectivity in grading practices (Murray, 1989; Tchudi, 1997). Inter-subjectivity is a process of integrating multiple subjects into a discourse. In the case of grading writing, it means thatan instructor must modify his or her discourse about grading to fit the subjectivity of the students. Many writing instructors do not do modify their feedback discourse to meet the different subjectivities of their students, but they will have to begin to do soif helping students is a priority. Too often, teachers eliminate possibilities in student writings because teachers cannot get beyond the paradigm they have created to reify their subjective values which are used to determine grades on a paper. Dohrer (1991) found that "good commentary, then, must prompt revision and must allow the student the opportunity to reconsider the text in light of the reader's response" (p. 52). A process of inter-subjective grading engages students allowing them to interact with their text through instructor feedback. According to a Kessels & Korthagen who comment on the importance of assessment:

Good deliberation accommodates itself to what it finds, responsively and with

> respect for complexity. It does not assume that the form of the rule governs the appearances; it allows the appearances to govern themselves and to be normative for the rules (1996, p. 19).

Writing instructors need to learn to evaluate writing from the student's perspective, from the student's interpretation of the writing guidelines. Instructors have to see "what is there" not "what they want to be there." This is especially the case with developmental writing students. Research by Faigley and Witte (1981) found that inexperienced writers revise less than experienced writers because they do not

understand how to revise, nor do they understand how to use instructor feedback to help them rewrite their papers.

Olson and Torrance (1983) made the point that "true discourse exists only between equals" (p. 39). When writing instructors view students in a subordinate position, research has shown that students are less likely to develop and become independent writers (Brannon and Knoblauch, 1982). As students begin to recognize that a teacher has a set of absolute beliefs about the subject they are teaching, students no longer develop intellectually. They begin to simply parrot the teacher's beliefs. Research into students' responses to instructors' comments on papers has found that students only make changes to their essay if those changes mirror how the instructor wants the student essay to look (Bardine 1999, Dohrer 1991, Greene 1995, Murray 1982, Shaugnessy 1977). In order for teacher feedback to become more useful to students, writing teachers must do a better job of establishing relationships with students concerning grading practices by analyzing their method of commenting on student essays.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Design

Laurel Richardson in "Writing: A Method of Inquiry" writes, "Language is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self" (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 925). Language in its interaction with subjects, affects a change in the subject. Given the crucial role that language – be it written or oral – plays in a developmental writing class, studying outcomes through a quantitative analysis would not have allowed for a rich description of the relationship between teachers and students. Thus, qualitative methodologies offered a much better paradigm for collecting and evaluating the data. Through writing, a case can be studied and the results of that studied presented in a much more understandable form than a quantitative study because a narrative allows for the analysis of multiple subjectivities. The participants involved in this study had different backgrounds, which influenced their responses. Presenting their perspectives was one purpose of this research; thus, it was imperative that their voices be present in this study. A narrative analysis was the best method for allowing the voices of the participants to speak in and through the research. This case study presented what Richardson characterizes as a "discursive struggle for identity and for remaking memory" (cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000 p. 929). Studying students in the context of the

developmental classroom was more meaningful because their "discursive struggles" with teacher feedback were presented and analyzed textually rather than merely quantified numerically

This research employed a case study approach. An example of teacher feedback on an out of class writing assignment was analyzed and the instructor's responses were coded. Students and the instructor were then surveyed and interviewed about the feedback on the writing assignment. This case study was designed to incorporate multiple qualitative research procedures in order to ensure a rich pool of data. Besides primary document analysis, the instructor and the student were given a survey of open-ended questions. In addition, the instructor and a group of students were interviewed. The students volunteered to be interviewed and were interviewed separately from each other.

The instructor was selected from the population of college-preparatory writing instructor at Valencia Community College's West Campus because the instructor was willing to participate, had more than five years teaching experience in college-preparatory writing, and taught college prep courses as her primary teaching load. Two sections of ENC 0012-College Preparatory Writing II were selected from her college teaching load based on the time of the classes and the demographics of the students. Time was considered to ensure that the results of the two sections could not be attributed to scheduling differences. On the West Campus of Valencia Community College, departmental research has shown that afternoon sections of ENC 0012 have an attrition rate approximately 10% higher than morning class even

though there is no difference in the social, ethnic, gender, or academic background of students. Also institutional research has shown that evening classes have a higher percentage of non-traditional students (students who are returning to college after a significant time period). For these, reasons, the sections selected for this study were both morning classes.

Setting

The setting for this study was ENC 0012, a College Preparatory Writing II class, at Valencia Community College, a large urban institution comprised of four main campuses and three smaller centers. Approximately 56,000 students attend Valencia Community College of that 56,000 approximately 21,484 are enrolled full-time. The sections of ENC 0012 studied were at Valencia Community College's West Campus, which had a total population of approximately 427 ENC 0012 college-preparatory writing students in the Fall, 2001.

Institutional pressures also played a role in this study because of the impact they had on the instructor. Valencia Community College's enrollment grew by approximately 24% college-wide in the Fall of 2001. This created a need for instructors to teach additional sections of courses. The instructor involved in this study taught two additional sections of courses in addition to her normal load of five classes. In addition to the increased sections, class capacity was increased to meet the increased enrollment. Thus, faculty had an additional 2-5 student added to their

classes. The instructor involved in this study had approximately 150 students in her classes. This placed a tremendous burden on the instructor given the workload required to teach a writing class. The instructor assigned ten papers a semester; therefore, throughout the course of the semester the instructor had to grade approximately 1500 papers. The instructor's feedback methods were definitely influenced by the time constraints of having to grade so many papers and deal with so many students.

In addition to her normal workload, the instructor also had to meet certain institutional demands required of her because of her tenure-track status. The instructor was required to participate in weekly training seminars and had to work on a research project throughout the semester. These additional demands also placed severe limitations on her time and had an impact on her ability to deal with her students and the students' writing assignments. The semester for the instructor involved was a whirlwind of teaching, meeting with students, planning lessons, grading, attending required meeting, and working on her research projects.

A final element that had an impact on the instructor were the demands of meeting the state mandate requirements for College Preparatory Writing II – ENC 0012 courses. The State of Florida passed a statute (240.117) requiring that all community colleges give a state developed exit exam to all students in ENC 0012. The exam is a two part exam involving a 40 question, multiple-choice test on essay and grammar skills. The second part of the test involves a timed-writing of 50 minutes. Each institution has the choice of requiring a paragraph or an essay. The

instructors at Valencia Community College require students to write an essay. Students must pass both parts of the exam in order to pass the class. Even if students passed the required course work, they would not pass the course if they failed the exam. This exam puts pressure on teachers because the administration at Valencia Community College uses student performance on this exit exam as a measure of program effectiveness. Even though there is no explicit requirement that a certain percentage of their students pass the exit exam, instructors know that administration looks at the performance of their students.

All of these factors impacted the classroom environment because both the instructor and her students were aware of these factors impacted the classroom. The instructor explained the exit exam requirements to the students at the beginning of the semester, and the students were keenly aware that this exam would be the deciding factor in their success.

Population

ENC 0012 is Valencia Community College's terminal level college preparatory course, and therefore, ENC 0012 students and their responses to teacher feedback were chosen as the focus for this study rather than responses from all college preparatory students. Full-time developmental writing instructors with a minimum of five-years of teaching experience in community colleges were asked to participate in the study. One instructor was chosen from five possible subjects

because the instructor had over five years' experience teaching developmental writing in the community college. More importantly, of the five, the instructor teaches developmental writing as her primary load.

Two sections of ENC 0012 students, comprising a total of 44 students and taught by the same instructor at Valencia Community College, West Campus, were the population. The two sections were selected because they were scheduled in the morning. Night classes at Valencia Community College sometimes have different populations. Institutional research has shown that evening sections have a higher percentage of non-traditional students. Non-traditional students are students who have returned to college after stopping out or who did not begin their college education immediately after high school. These students tend to work full-time, have a family, be single parents, and are older. Thus studying one night class and one morning class might have affected the results of the study. In addition, students in morning classes tend to be of the same age group and tend to be first time in college students. All students in both sections were first time in college students and the average age of both sections was 19 years old.

Of the 45 students, 36 participated in the study. Women accounted for 19 of the 36 students. The racial demographics of the two sections were as follows: Caucasian students – 24; African-American students – 15; Hispanic students – 3; Haitian students – 2; Vietnamese students – 1. Of the students who participated in the study, the demographics were as follows: Caucasian students – 17; African-American students – 13; Hispanic students – 3; Haitian students – 2; Vietnamese students – 1.

Methodology

Observation

Beginning the third week of class, both sections of ENC 0012 were observed. The observation did not begin until the third week of class because orientation to the class and the administering of a diagnostic test took place during the first two weeks. The purpose of the observation was to record the teaching practices of the instructor focusing specifically on feedback practices. In addition, interactions between teacher and students were noted as well as interactions between students. These interactions provided explanations of student responses to teacher feedback.

Analysis of Writing Assignments

One student writing assignment was analyzed for the types of feedback given by the instructor. The assignments were collected during the ninth week of class in order to ensure that the instructor had time to give several writing assignments and had explained her methodology for grading those assignments. The instructor was asked to grade the assignment as she had other assignments. In order to ensure that the instructor was not grading this assignment differently, previous assignments were used as a comparison. The feedback was coded into the categories in the table below. These categories are based on a similar study by Bryan Bardine (1999). The major

difference is that Bardine was studying high school students from advanced classes. The categories have been adapted to fit this study.

Table 1

Categories of Instructor Feedback

Type of Feedback	Definition
Written comments	These are brief responses made without use of symbols.
Symbols	Any abbreviation or representational mark used to identify an error, including numbers.
Combination	This type of feedback contains both a symbol and an accompanying written comment that helps to clarify the symbol.
Positive feedback	Any comment giving praise
Negative feedback	Any comment pointing out a writing deficiency using a negative construction
Directive instruction	Any comment telling a student how to correct an error.
Corrective	Any comment that corrects an error for a student

After the coding was completed, the instructor was surveyed and interviewed about her feedback, and the instructor was asked to review the coding and make comments. Students were also surveyed and interviewed about their instructor's feedback.

Another important element of the analysis of the student writing was the number of different skills marked by the instructor. Research by Daiker, Kerek, and Morenberg (1986) and Dohrer (1991) showed that when teachers marked all errors, students were confused and unable to revise their writing. However, the research

failed to explain why the marking of more than one type of error made students feel overwhelmed and unable to revise their writing. Students were asked how they react to revision when they have multiple types of errors noted and multiple types of feedback made on their paper, and if this posed a problem, students were asked to explain whether such a practice made revision difficult.

Instruments

Instructor Survey

A survey of open-ended questions was given to the participating college preparatory instructor. Surveying the instructor provided a point of contrast to the student survey results and the student interviews.

The survey consisted of the following questions:

1. What methods do you use to explain how you grade student papers?
2. What methods do you use to explain your grading scale and/or grading rubric?
3. What methods do you use to explain the symbols, abbreviations, and comments that you use to grade students' writing assignments?
4. Describe any problems students have interpreting your feedback on their papers.

5. Explain why students do and/or do not understand how to use your feedback to help them improve their writing.

The results of the open-ended survey provided information about the grading practices of the teacher. This information was used to help analyze the writing assignments and to develop questions for the student interviews. In addition, the results were used to develop questions for the instructor interview.

Student Survey

A survey was given to all members of the developmental writing section being studied (See Appendix A). Beginning this case study by investigating students' attitudes toward and perceptions of teachers' feedback through a survey composed of open-ended questions was important for two reasons:

1. Student responses to the survey provided a source for developing questions for the focus group interviews.
2. Student responses to the survey provided a basis of comparison for the group responses, the teacher survey, the teacher interview, and the comparison to other research.

Rather than relying solely on establishing prefigured foci, the data collected were studied for emergent foci. The key to this study was allowing themes and trends to emerge through the data collected. Although this method relied heavily on the subjectivity of the researcher, it provided a rich description of the case being studied.

Student Interviews

Students from the same sections of ENC 0012 who completed the survey were asked to participate in individual interviews. The purpose of these interviews was to ask follow-up questions about the data collected from the surveys, to allow students to respond to the results of the student survey, and to elicit more specific commentary on how they interpreted teacher feedback.

Data Collection

The students' writing assignments were collected the eighth week of class, and then the types of feedback made by the instructor were analyzed for trends in responses. Other student writing assignments were analyzed to ensure that the instructor did not make more comments or different comments on the writing assignment used for this study.

In the tenth week of classes, students were given a survey of questions about the instructor's feedback on their writing assignment. The survey was given in class, but the instructor was not present. Students had their fourth writing assignment to use as a source for specific examples to the questions on the survey. The results of the survey were analyzed and coded into the following categories: negative responses, positive responses, mixed responses (combination of both positive and negative responses). These results were then used during the student and instructor interviews.

The instructor was also given a survey of open-ended questions about her feedback practices during the tenth week. Her responses were used to prepare for the interview and to provide background for her feedback practices.

During the eleventh and twelve weeks, the students were interviewed about the instructor's feedback. Student interview were then transcribed verbatim. In addition, notes were taken during and after the interview. The notes were used to clarify garbled or inaudible parts of the recorded interview. The notes were also used as a means of comparing the initial reaction of the interviewer to later reactions. Once the tapes were transcribed, the results were analyzed for trends in responses to the specific types of feedback used by the instructor.

Because the results of the student interviews were shared with the instructor, the instructor was not interviewed until after the end of the semester in order to ensure that no action would be taken against students for comments made by the students. Even though students were not identified by name, it may have been possible for the instructor to determine which student made a certain comment. Before sharing the results of the student interviews and survey with the instructor, the instructor was interviewed about her feedback practices. The instructor's interviews were transcribed verbatim and the results were compared with notes taken during and after the interview. The data gathered were then analyzed and used as a point of comparison to students' reactions to the teacher's feedback.

The last method of data collection used was observation. Both sections of classes were observed daily for the entire semester. Notes were taken during and

after each class. These notes provided background data for the teacher's classroom practice as it was related to her feedback practices. Observation also allowed the researcher to analyze the classroom interactions between students and the instructor. The information obtained during the observation was used during the interviews.

Data Analysis

In evaluating the data, it was important to rely on both emergent themes and prefigured themes. The subjectivity of the researcher played a large role in the evaluation of the data. Although the subjectivity of the researcher is viewed negatively in a quantitative study, in a qualitative case study, it is part of the research. Stephen Kemmis commented, "Case study consists in the imagination of the case and the invention of the study" (cited in Bassey,1999). This study was designed to gather data about teacher feedback using multiple methods in order to have the generative tension necessary for the results to have validity. The term generative tension is used to denote a quality of validity caused by the juxtaposing of multiple viewpoints with the intention of creating a meaning that can clarify or explain a subject. According to Lincoln and Denzin, the data in a qualitative study can be triangulated by comparing data gathered by different methods of collection (2000 p. 445). In this case study, codes, categories and themes for organizing the data were identified after all the data was collected and analyzed. Robert Stake characterized triangulation as a result of "redundancy in collecting data" and procedural explanation of how the data are being

interpreted (p. 442). In order to triangulate the data collected, the procedures for collecting them are varied, as are the sources. In this study, triangulization was achieved by collecting data using observation, textual analysis, surveys, and interviews.

The following were the prefigured foci for the analysis of data.

1. Context of the Case - The context of the case for the purposes of this study was defined as the teacher feedback on a writing assignment and students' reactions to that feedback.

2. The Physical Setting – The physical setting for the purposes of this study was defined as the classroom environment which may be composed of the following characteristics: the physical arrangement of equipment and furniture in the class, the seating arrangement of the students, the position of the instructor in relationship to the students, and any other environmental factors that impact the students and instructor.

3. Background of Participants – The background of participants for the purpose of this study was defined as the gender, age, socio-economic status, and race of both the instructor and the students. In addition, the students' academic performances in the class and at Valencia Community College were considered.

4. Other Contexts - Other contexts for the purpose of this study was defined as any phenomena which affected this study.

In dealing with the data and writing a narrative, the following criteria were used as guidelines for constructing the narrative. In order to develop validity, the

narrative analysis included the following criteria derived from the work of Laurel Richardson (2000), Norman Denzin, (1989), and Eliot Eisner (1998).

Criteria

Credibility

This criterion will be explained by a narrative analysis of the following factors:

- Authentic representation of experience
- Researcher as instrument
- Emphasis on the research endeavor
- Disciplined subjectivity
- Prolonged engagement
- Triangulation
- Referential Adequacy

Transferability

This criterion will be explained by a narrative analysis of the following factors:

- Fit within contexts outside the study situation
- Time and context bound experience

Dependability

This criterion will be explained by a narrative analysis of the following factors:

- Variability tracked to identifiable sources
- Consistency in interpretation (Same phenomena always matched with the same constructs)
- Multiple Realities as defined by the idiosyncrasy of student /teacher behaviors in a given context

Confirmability

This criterion will be explained by a narrative analysis of the following factors:

Extent to which biases, motivations, interest or perspectives of the inquirer influence interpretations

Focus on investigator and interpretations

The above criteria were considered collectively by the researcher as the data was interpreted and presented in a narrative. The difficulty of ensuring validity in a case study and in qualitative research stems from the subjective relationship of the researcher to the subject being studied. However, subjectivity in any research is unavoidable. Ratcliffe (1983) stated, "Data do not speak for themselves; there is always interpreter or translator" (p. 149). Allowing the above criteria to guide the analysis of the data helped to ensure the validity of the results because it forced the researcher to view and compare the results from different perspectives. The above criteria were met through a use of multiple methods of collecting data and through comparing the results of that data constantly and consistently when reporting on the findings of this research.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Pseudonyms were used to report the data in the following section. In addition, the wording of the student's responses was kept as close as possible to the original. An inability to decipher student comments during the tape transcription sometimes required the researcher to clarify the student's words.

In reporting on the findings of this study, the researcher has focused on describing how students reacted in the contexts of this study. Background variables such as gender, socio-economic-status, age, and ethnicity did not appear to play a role in the student's interactions to instructor feedback; thus, these variables are not discussed in great depth in the data analysis. Based on the classroom observation and the results of the surveys and interviews, the variables mentioned above had no impact on teacher feedback than in this study. It is possible that the ethnicity of the researcher and background of the researcher precluded students from openly discussing how ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status affected responses to feedback. Because the researcher is Caucasian as was the instructor and because the researcher identified himself as an instructor on the West Campus of Valencia Community College, students may not have been as open in discussing the instructor's biases. However, based on the observation of the class, the analysis of student writing, and the instructor's responses to the survey and interview questions, no biases based on race or gender were apparent.

Students did not give consistent responses individually or collectively to the survey and interview questions making it difficult to establish trends. Even when a clear reaction to a certain method of feedback was evident in the data, exceptions to that clear reaction were also present. The fact that students did not provide consistent answers to these research questions was not unexpected. Indeed, the fact that students found certain feedback practices helpful while others did not was an important outcome of the study. However, this inconsistency in response made reporting the results difficult. Therefore, to facilitate reporting of the outcomes of this study, the results of the study will be reported generally under each research question. Important exceptions to the majority trend identified by the researcher will be noted in each section. Some types of feedback will be discussed in each of the question because there was a mixed reaction from the students.

In order to answer the questions of the study the data from five sources were analyzed.

1. Student survey results
2. Teacher Survey results
3. Analysis of teacher responses
4. Student interview results
5. Teacher interview results

Research Question 1

What types of teacher feedback are most effective in helping students to improve their writing?

With the exception of one student, all of the students participating in the study found the instructor's oral comments to be the most effective type of feedback. Every student who participated in the study said when the instructor gave specific oral feedback - be it in the classroom or in office conferences – they clearly understood what she meant and could apply her feedback to the improvement of their writing. Even students who had made negative comments about the other methods of instructor feedback commented on the instructor's effective use of oral communication to give feedback about writing assignments. One student even said all feedback should be given in oral form. In an interview an African-American student, Janelle, said oral feedback was more effective because ". . . she is more focused on me, just, you know, just on one person rather than like twenty or thirty students." Carrie, a Caucasian student, said, "She explained what did I need help on. What I need to focus on more, which was like my editing that I do . . . ." Basically, students viewed oral feedback as a demonstration of the instructor having time devoted to their needs. The one on one attention was more effective because students could enter into an immediate dialogue about their writing. Anthony, an African-American student, in the interview explained:

> It's like a good help cause you can . . . cause your there, and you get to say, "Okay, I don't understand a, I don't understand B, and then they explain it to

you. It's better than in class when you have like say twenty-five other kids having questions.

Ironically, students who were interviewed admitted that they rarely if ever went to the instructor to ask for oral feedback even when they did not understand written or symbolic feedback. Taylor, a Caucasian student, in particular gave a particularly vitriolic diatribe against the instructor because the student did not understand the instructor's feedback. When asked if he had tried to ask for clarification from the instructor, Taylor responded, "No." When asked why, the Taylor could or would not give a reason; she simply shrugged her shoulders and said, "I don't know." When asked if it was because she felt uncomfortable with the instructor, the student said, "No." Finally, the student said, "She never says anything positive."

The only student to react negatively to oral feedback was the one Vietnamese student in the class. Her reaction, though, was not entirely negative. The student liked the instructor and felt the instructor was trying to help. Helen said, "She was spend time to me every week. I have to meet her because the way I write is not so well, so she spend one more every week discuss my problem." The instructor would go over her paper and give her more topics for practice writings; Helen found this helpful. However, like most non-native speakers, Helen wanted more feedback on grammar; however, the instructor would not explain grammar. This frustrated Helen. She said, " . . . in class, she doesn't teach the grammar because we save that for the Prep I . . . I don't know why. She just say go home and read that, and I don't

understand . . . ." Helen was very difficult to understand in the interview, but Helen did not think that the instructor had a problem understanding her. This was not the case. When asked, the instructor commented on the difficulty of understanding Helen and was not sure how much Helen understood.

The instructor was asked to explain why she thought students viewed oral feedback as the most effective:

> Although the attention we give students in responding to their writing is very individual, I don't think that they appreciate our written responses as personal attention. But when we sit down face-to-face, they know that they've go our attention and they respond accordingly. And here we have yet another case of the typical prep students not being proactive enough in their own learning. All of the students commented that one-on-one conferences gave them the most beneficial feedback, but only the few who really understand how more and better feedback can affect their progress take advantage of the opportunity to conference about their writing on an ongoing basis.

Most students also reacted to the instructor's written comments positively. However, this form of feedback like the oral feedback was the least frequently used by the instructor. Most of the written comments were directive in that they explained how students could improve their essays. For example the instructor made the following comment in reference to a student's thesis statement: "This seems to be your thesis so to develop it you must give evidence the kids have been 'made or broken' by this kind of parenting." In the student interview, when asked about this specific comment on his paper, the student, Tyler, replied, "Yeah, that was helpful. I could see what she meant and changed my thesis to fit it (his paper)."

Very few written comments were corrective; the instructor rarely corrected grammar, spelling, punctuation or structural errors. Most students found that these

written comments – whether corrective or directive - helped them to not only see their mistakes but to also correct them.

However, the instructor rarely used this type of feedback. The instructor phrased most of her written comments negatively in the form of questions. Even when the written comment did not have a negative construction, it did have a negative tone. On some papers, there were no written comments. On the survey a Hispanic student, Lourdes wrote, "When there's a lot of comments, I feel good." Another students said, "Almost any kind of comments - good or bad - are helpful."

As noted earlier most of the written comments by the instructor were stated in the form of question. When asked why she used questions to give written feedback, the following exchange took place:

Instructor: "I believe that questions are a way to model for students the critical thinking process that is at the core of active reading an evaluation. The questions that I ask are questions that they need to learn to ask themselves about their writing as they work through the revision process."

Researcher: "Do you they really ever begin to do this?"

Instructor: "I don't believe that students really pay very much attention to the comments that we write on their papers, but I think that questions are more likely to prompt some thinking about the choices they have made and things they could have done better."

Researcher: "Do they all like this method?"

Instructor: No, I don't think they all like it. Many are probably annoyed by it. But I don't do it to make them happy; I do it to goad them into thinking."

Some students responded well to this "goading," but others did not. One student believed the instructor's comments to be mean and sarcastic. The student stopped reading the instructor's comments and only looked at the grades and the symbols.

Students wanted to see more combination feedback from the instructor. However, the instructor did not significantly use this type of feedback. Combination feedback was only used when the instructor drew an error and then explained the correction that was necessary. In particular, students wanted to see more comments, which gave examples of the written feedback. For instance, the instructor made the following comment on one student's paper: "This is very specific negative advice, but it doesn't give any information about what I should eat." When I asked the student about this comment in the interview, the following conversation took place:

Latasha:	It would have been more helpful if she had given me an example too.
Researcher:	But isn't clear from the comment what she wants?
Latasha:	Well, yeah. She wants an example of good food.
Researcher:	So if you know what she wants, why do you need an example?
Latasha:	It . . . it makes me more sure. If she gives me an example, I'll know exactly what she wants.
Researcher:	Is that important . . .
Latasha:	What?
Researcher:	. . . to know what she wants?
Latasha:	Yeah, I mean she's the teacher; she's the expert.

In general, students wanted examples or further written commentary not just for clarification but for reassurance. Students were very aware of the power relationship at play in the class. During one class, the teacher was asking for responses about an example essay. She wanted to offer an evaluation. One student, Jason, asked, 'What do you think?" The teacher laughed and said, "I don't know; I want to know what you think of this essay?" Jason persisted in asking for the instructor's opinion first. Other students also began to make the same request. The teacher became a little frustrated. Finally another student, William, said, "You're the teacher. You know. It's your job to tell us. We just want to give you what you want." The teacher paused for a moment and said, "It's not just about giving me what I want." She then tried to explain how these skills were universal to all writing situations. She never did get a response from the students that class, but eventually she was able to get students to offer evaluations of student writing. This episode took place about the fifth week of class and demonstrated the level of both insecurity and awareness in developmental students. I asked about this episode, when I interviewed the instructor:

Instructor: I'm always somewhat amused by that question.

Researcher: What does their response tell you?

Instructor: I think it suggests that students don't realize that what I want from them is not a matter of personal preference but follows from commonly held expectations in the academic community and in the literate world outside the institution.

Researcher: Does this attitude worry you?

Instructor: As long as they finally come to realize that, I don't think that, I don't think the attitude will hurt them in the long run. The

biggest difficulty is that they may lose valuable time in trying to figure out the teacher instead of tackling the problem.

Research Question 2

What types of feedback on writing assignments are ineffective for developmental writing students?

Although a few students liked the numbering system that the instructor used to identify grammar, spelling and punctuation errors, most reacted negatively to it. The following is a brief explanation of the instructor's system. The instructor's numbering system replaced the traditional symbols and abbreviations used by writing instructors. The instructor also used color markers to highlight errors. Each color represented a specific type of error: surface-level errors were marked in red, sentence structure errors were marked in green, and essay writing competencies were marked in purple. At the beginning of the semester, the instructor handed out a work sheet with a list of errors keyed to a number. When the instructor identified an error, she would label it with the corresponding number. Students would then refer back to the handout to figure out the grammar, spelling or punctuation skill each number was referred to. They then had to review the appropriate chapters in the text in order to understand their error.

The biggest problem with this system was students did not know why the error identified was a mistake, and thus, they did not know how to fix it. If it was a clear mistake, like a misspelled word or a homonym, then they had little problem

correcting the error. However, they were still likely to make the same mistake on the next paper. For example, one student had a problem with the difference between "its" and "it's." Even thought the mistake was identified on several papers, the student continued to make the same error. When the student, Amy, was asked why, she said, "It's like when you're writing you don't pay attention to that stuff. I mean you're more worried about ideas and things like that."

Students benefited from this method in that errors were identified for them, but when students were asked how to fix the identified grammar mistakes, nine of the students interviewed could not explain how to fix a grammar mistake. Of the 36 who participated in the study, 20 showed no significant change in proofreading skills. Of those eighteen, eleven failed the course. This system worked will with easier surface level errors like homonyms and punctuation, but students had difficulty with harder skills and concepts like fragments, modifiers, and pronouns. For the most, students felt abandoned by this system because they were unable to understand how to go about proofreading for and then fixing grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. One student, Tanya, when asked how she improved her proofreading skills said, "I kinda figured it out on my own." Her comment was an adequate summation of how most students learned to proofread using the instructor's numbering system. Ironically, almost all students on the survey and in the interviews wanted the teacher to mark errors. One of the biggest criticisms of the instructor was that on in-class writings she did not identify grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors.

The biggest complaint about the symbol system used by the instructor was that it was confusing and unwieldy. The following are a sample of the criticisms made by students on the surveys and in the interviews about this system:

Jamaal – an African-American students said:

> "Well, yeah, on my paper, uh, the grammar, you see all the numbers here and there, and some of 'em say and this doesn't make no sense, and it like gives you little hints, but it doesn't show you what you do to make it better."

Sheryl – a Caucasian student said:

> "The overall outcome is positive, but the way it's written, it shows that it's negative cause it's something wrong, but if I could read it, and find a way to fix it, then the overall outcome would be positive."

Martin – a Caucasian student said:

> "Um to an extent it gets kind of confusing though, cause you have to keep looking back at the sheet, cause obviously we don't have 'em memorized like she does, so sometimes it's like repetitive."

Paula – a Hispanic student said:

> "I don't really like the numbering system. It gets kind of confusing and most of the time there's just a number comment. I like when suggestions are made so I can fix that error and become better by learning how to fix things."

When I asked the instructor why students reacted this way, she gave the following explanation:

> And this is yet another case where some students will learn little or nothing while other students learn a lot from the same technique. As I said before, I think much of what we write on student's papers is ignored or given only the most cursory attention. For those students who use the editing symbols as a guide to rewriting the essay, the numbers give them a clue as to what is wrong without doing all the editing work for them. If they want to get it right, they will have to really look at the error, think about what's wrong, and sometimes investigate in order to be able to make correction. The invitation to rewrite for a better grade is therefore not a

> free ride, and does seem to be a learning experience because students do reduce the number of errors through this process.

Students did reduce the number of errors they made overall. However, the stronger writers made the greatest improvement while the weakest made little or no improvement in proofreading.

Based on the results of this study, the students who had the weakest skill did not benefit from this system. Helen, the Vietnamese student, was a good example. The use of numbers to indicate errors did not help her and in her own estimation confused her even more. Native speaking student felt the same way. One student, David, who also failed said:

> I don't think her feedback helps. The reason is because she doesn't explain anything. All she does is point at a number and expect us to go back and read. I bet you half the kids in this room just throw the paper in their notebook and don't think twice about checking it.

The instructor did not significantly use combination feedback; it was only used when the instructor drew an arrow to indicate where something was missing or incorrect, and then explained the correction that was necessary.

Many students commented on the negative emphasis of the instructor's feedback. One African-American student, Janette said, "I guess this is another way of saying, Stupid!" Another student, Karen, wrote the following response on the survey:

> Okay, yes she should point out my mistakes but don't try to make me look stupid because am very smart It's just writing is not one of my favorite things. If she really wants to help maybe, she could write examples of these things. I

> know I should know these things but is it really going to kill her no it will just make me stronger.

Students understood the focus on mistakes and actually wanted their errors pointed out. In fact most of the students were disgruntled when the instructor did not mark errors. All commented negatively on the fact that the instructor did not mark errors on the in-class writings. Student wanted more of a balance from the instructor. They wanted to hear what they did well.

In analyzing the writing assignments, there were a total of four overtly positive instances of feedback dealing with writing made on the 36 papers analyzed. The instructor did give neutral feedback, and she also made frequent positive responses to the content of the essay. Tyler made the following comment during his interview:

> I would just like to see some recognition for what I've done right. I worked hard on my writing and I want to see that she noticed. I want some acknowledgement, more than just a grade or a number.

When asked about her student's reaction to her feedback, the instructor made the following comment:

> I think most people are sensitive to criticism, so those students were responding in a typically human way to comments which pointed to their inadequacies. Most of our students are also a product of a system which has not given them much opportunity to get used to criticism. That system has shown us that we can avoid making negative comments if we simply ignore the deficiencies in our students' writing, but that system has also shown us what the price will be.

The final areas of feedback most students found ineffective were the two separate rubrics that the instructor used to assign point values to out of class essays and to in-class essays. For in class writings, the instructor used a five criteria scale

and each criterion was worth 20 points. The instructor, on a handout, listed specifically what each score meant. (See Appendix B) However, many students clearly did not understand this feedback method. Students could not or did not use the assessment to help them understand how to improve their writing. As Latasha said in the interview, "I just look to see if my score is passing." In the interview, the instructor identified the problem with criteria based scoring when she made the following comment: "Students must learn the system as well."

Students did not learn the system well and therefore had a negative view of it. The reasons for this outcome are varied. First of all, the students did not make any effort to seek clarification from the instructor. They simply looked at the score and moved on. The instructor did give an explanation and did have students apply the rubric, but the instructor only did the activity once and made no assessment to see if students had learned from the activities. Students were also apathetic because they knew the grades were not terminal since the instructor used a portfolio system to help determine the final grades. Ironically, students did not seem to take into account the fact that the portfolio only counted for 30% of their final grade. The initial assessment counted for 30% as well. Thus, in a sense, the initial score they received was a terminal assessment. Finally, the instructor did not make consistent and thorough oral or written feedback to justify her numeric scoring of each area. When the instructor did give written feedback, students responded positively. As one student said, "The number doesn't mean anything. I don't understand what the

handout says. It's easier to understand when she explains it to me." Once again, it should be noted that only four students indicated that they made an effort to ask the instructor for clarification. Most only received clarification or asked for it during their mandatory mid-term conference.

For the in-class writing, the instructor used a holistic scale. The student would receive a number from 1 to 4. The instructor had a rubric that described the qualities of each score. Students were given a copy of this rubric and model essays. However, after discussing the student models and the rubric one, the instructor did not do so again. Students only received a holistic score of 1 to 4 on their essay, but no other feedback was given. Two students interviewed found the method effective, but the rest of the rest did not because they received no feedback. The students understood the score, but they wanted the instructor to explain the score, and they wanted the instructor to point out strengths and weaknesses in the text.

Research Question 3

How do developmental writing students use teacher feedback to improve their writing?

The answer to this question was complicated because students in the survey and in the interviews had a difficult time finding the language to describe what they did to improve their writing. One student typified the problems other students faced when having to use teacher feedback to improve their writing. This student did not

have an either or response to how she used the instructor's feedback to improve her writing. Like most students, she was able to understand some of the instructor's methods of feedback well enough to improve her writing; on the other hand, she did not understand certain aspects of the instructor's feedback, and thus could not use the feedback to improve her writing. For instance, she did not understand the color coding system because without written commentary, she could not understand why there was a problem.

Other aspects of the instructor's feedback methodology provoked disparate responses in student. For example, one student Jasmine, liked but was confused by the instructor's numbering system. She indicated that she liked the numbering system, for it pointed out her grammatical errors. She felt, rightly, that proofreading was her weak area and expected the instructor to identify all her grammatical errors. However, in the interview, she discussed how the numbering system confused her and did not help her understand how to fix her grammar errors. When I asked her how she proofread for grammar errors, she had a general understanding of how to proofread, but she could not explain how to look for a specific error. Therefore, I asked her the following questions about a specific type of error: pronoun reference.

Researcher: Do you try to proofread for it?

Jasmine: Yeah.

Researcher: How do you?

Jasmine: Well, I go back to the book and see why it's wrong. Then when I write a new paper, I look for the same mistake.

Researcher: You just look line by line?

Jasmine: No, I kinda just read the paper again.

Researcher: Are you just looking for that type of error (its/it's)?

Jasmine: No, I look for everything.

Researcher: Has your instructor ever discussed how to proofread?

Jasmine: Kind of. She said just go review the book. Then check your paper. If you have trouble, try reading the sentence backwards.

Researcher: That's it?

Jasmine: Yeah.

Researcher: Does this work?

Jasmine: Kind of. I don't know. I don't make as many mistakes. My grades are better. That's what matters?

Researcher: The grades or you aren't making as many mistakes?

Jasmine: Both I guess.

Jasmine never received direction or feedback about her proof reading from the instructor; however, she did not specifically ask for additional direction or feedback. Jasmine continued to make pronoun errors in her papers, but she had no motivation to seek help in this area because her other areas of writing had improved. Specifically, her organization and support improved. Because she was receiving better grades that were more than satisfactory and because she was receiving passing grades on the in-class writing, the student did not think it was important to improve in areas she was still deficient in. However, she did note that the professor's feedback was crucial in her overall improvement:

> I think I did learn a lot from that (the instructor's written, oral, and symbolic feedback) because she, I asked her how I could be a better writer, and she explained to me that in order to become a better reader and writer I needed to read and write more. And her comments on my paper showed me how to do that. The questions made me think and made me recognize my mistakes. I didn't make the same mistakes again. I got better with my support. It was pretty helpful.

The above statement, although it contradicted her overall negative response to the instructor's feedback, showed the complex nature of the relationship between feedback and response. Students may not have had a conscious understanding of how the instructor's feedback helped them to improve their writing, and they may have had negative reactions to the feedback, but at some level, all the students used the feedback to improve their writing.

Three students, in particular, completely shutdown and made not attempt to decipher the instructor's feedback. Predictably, all three failed, and not so predictably, the three made not attempt to discuss their lack of problems understanding feedback with the instructor. One student, Simon, who was Caucasian, stopped trying to understand the instructor's feedback because there were no positive comments on her paper. Other students made the same observation, but this was the only student who stopped making an effort to improve. On the in-class survey, Simon indicated that none of the comments made sense, but offered no reason why. Because he failed to show for several scheduled interviews, I had no definitive reason for his not responding to the instructor's feedback. However the instructor's use of holistic, criteria-scale, and portfolio assessment did confuse students and may have kept some from progressing in the course. If Simon was confused by the instructor's

feedback, he may have decided – consciously or unconsciously – to stop participating in the class.

For one student, language was definitely a barrier. This student, Helen, was Vietnamese and was taking ENC 0012 for the third time. Helen believed the instructor's comments were punitive and unhelpful because they only told her what was wrong but did not explain how to fix each error. On conferences with the instructor, the student felt she was being "talked at" rather than "talked to." The student then turned to the campus-writing center, but the tutors there could not understand the instructor's method of feedback, so the tutors sent this student back to the instructor.

Research Question 4

What did a college preparatory instructor at Valencia Community do to help students understand feedback on writing assignments?

The instructor used three methods of helping the student understand her feedback: lecture, modeling, and oral feedback. The instructor explained all of her rubrics and methods using lecture and then gave examples of those rubrics and methods as she had applied them to past student essays. Students responded well to the modeling activities finding them "helpful" because they gave "concrete examples of what she wants from us." However, given the responses on the survey and interviews, this method was not effective because most students could not

demonstrate a thorough understanding of thee instructor's feedback. Most students did not make an effort to ask the instructor for further clarification, but the instructor did not provide any follow up activities to reinforce student understanding of her feedback.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

The problem with teacher feedback is that it constantly strives for pedagogical hegemony. But in the developmental education classroom hegemony is an impossibility given the background of the student population. Besides traditional factors such as gender, race, and socio-economic status, motivation, self-efficacy, academic background, class load, work load, familial and social responsibilities, attitudes towards the instructor, towards other students, towards the subject all play a factor in the performance and persistence of students and have an impact on feedback that cannot be overcome by consistent and rigorous application of pedagogy. The contradiction is an instructor must strive for pedagogical hegemony when implementing feedback practices while recognizing this is an impossible task. The results of this study have demonstrated that consistency is an illusory paradigm that must be molded to fit the exigencies of each case – each student's particular context with the class structure.

Developmental writing instructors are part of a field inculcated with diverse ideologies structured by the restraints of institutionalized practices controlling classroom practice through the imposition of mandates and course objectives.

Feedback has to adapt to the myriad impositions of outside forces on writing courses. Writing instructors can no longer use monolithic methodologies in their classrooms. When instructors implement feedback monolithically, it is transformed into an ancillary practice imposed on students but not comprehended by the students. Students must comprehend feedback practices – even partially – if their writing is going to improve. An overt procedural understanding of the teacher's feed back practices is not even necessary. In this study, students who could not explain the feedback practices of the instructor still benefited from teacher feedback and improved their writing. However, based on the results of this study, it is imperative that the instructor has a coherent and consistent feedback methodology.

Feedback in the Developmental Education Classroom

The variety of feedback practices used to assess student writing could be judged positively and negatively. Several contrasting methods of evaluation underpinned the instructor's practices and impacted student understanding of her feedback negatively and caused students the most cognitive dissonance. Because writing intrinsically relies on abstract thought and because many developmental writing students struggle to understand abstract cognitive processes, these students will not understand teacher feedback unless the abstract is made concrete. Feedback, if it remains too theoretical, becomes an obstacle to understanding. According to Gary Thomas (1997), "There is a danger that in compacting, trimming, and generally

forcing the worlds with which we work into theoretical mold we distort and misperceive those worlds" (p. 98). In search of meaningful practice, many developmental writing instructors do not interpret an apply theory correctly. The instructor in this case based her ideas of feedback on portfolio grading, but her use of traditional criteria and scaled based assessment undermined the basic premise of portfolio assessment: students are not given a grade so that they are forced to focus on the act of revision. The teacher's gave grades to motivate students to revise. She said, "They must feel that if they make the effort to rewrite there is a possibility of tangible rewards in a higher grade." This response is based on the assumption that student's are motivated by the promise of better grades. It does not take into account the effects consistently poor grades have on students.

Several students in the class "shut down" because they consistently received poor grades. Many developed a negative attitude towards the instructor because they felt she was too harsh. Some simply did not understand the point system. A number for them did not equate to feedback even when the number had a corresponding narrative description. As one student said, "Those words (referring to the narrative description) don't mean nothing. I don't know what they mean."

When an instructor is forced by mandates to address a writing method – the state mandated in-classed timed writing – which is in direct opposition to the instructor's stated and unstated philosophy of composition, it forces an instructor to adopt multiple methods of assessing student writing, and this can be problematic for both the instructor and the students. In this case, essentially what happened is the

instructor had to be a grading "bricoleur." The term bricoleur derives from the French term bricolage, which means a piece of "makeshift handiwork" or "improvisation" (Baldick, 1990, The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms, p. 26). The connotation of the word suggests an artistic ability to assemble from the materials, immediately at hand, a cohesive work. When feedback is only offered as a one-time formative assessment, it is a semi-legitimate assessment of student competency. Did this happen in the case involved in this study? It did and it did not. The instructor's use of a criteria-based point scale did not help students to understand their writing progress and created confusion about just what terms like coherence and unity meant. Assigning a point value even when there is an explanatory rubric attached did not help students to understand the concepts. However, students were able to understand the teacher's feedback on these abstract areas when they went to her for clarification. The instructor most effective method of feedback was through conferencing, which took place one on one in the instructor's office. Every student interviewed stated that they learned the most from the instructor's one on one attention in both scheduled and unscheduled conferences in the instructor's office.

The teaching of writing has never been an exact science, nor is it a discipline where a consensus on teaching methods will ever be reached. The impetus for following a case study approach to this research - rather than doing a wider survey of teachers' classroom practices – stemmed from this realization. A great deal of variety in methods of feedback can be found in English departments among the teachers of developmental writing. Trying to discover if this variety has helped or hindered

students would have been a difficult task. In trying to focus on one instructor, this research sought to provide an insight into the motivations and ideologies that informed the instructor with the intention of discovering how students respond to the instructor's feedback. At a community college, developmental writing instructors deal with a group of student who come from different backgrounds culturally, ethnically, socially, economically, and academically. Any attempt to have a coherent methodology of feedback will be affected by the background of the students. From semester to semester, these backgrounds change. One semester, an instructor may have a class of students who academically are more homogeneous. Another semester, academically they may have students who are "all over the aboard" in academic ability. The instructor in this study noted the difficulties of dealing with such a changing population. She said, "From semester to semester, you never know what you are going to get." When asked what can be done to address this problem, she said the following:

> We need to be able to give students more individual attention, the kind of feedback that they have found so beneficial in the individual conferences. I think we've made some positive steps in that direction with the help that students are now getting from the lab personnel, but we need to find a way of reaching more students with the kind of individual guidance and intervention in the writing process which is currently only reaching those students who choose to do their writing in the lab.

This same insight applies to developmental writing instructors when they are designing ands implementing feedback practices. If the instructor does not consider the background variables of the class and simply plods along using the same feedback practices from the previous semester, then students may not respond to feedback

simply because they do not have the same characteristics of the student from the previous semester. Individualized feedback may be the only effective way to engage students, but it will be difficult to implement.

Giving more individualized attention is a problem for several reasons, but time is the most critical. The instructor, and most instructors at Valencia Community College carry the same load, was teaching her normal full load (5 sections with at least 22 students in each section) as well as two additional sections as overloads. In addition, because the instructor recently earned a tenure-track position, she had to participate in a series of training workshops which are part of the tenure process. Besides all of this, the instructor had to participate in other duties such as attending departmental meetings. Given that the students write approximately 10 essays a semester, the instructor had to grade approximately 1,540 essays. Thus the time was and is and will be the number one influence on feedback for any writing instructor. The instructor explained that her feedback methodology was influenced by time considerations. Her use of a numbering system, holistic assessment, a point system, and portfolio system were all attempts to deal with time. The lack of specific praise and written comments – the two types of feedback most desired by students – stems from a lack of time. However, given all of the problems the instructor faced, her method of feedback was effective for many students.

Kenneth Burke, in *A Rhetoric of Motive*, said, "Let us try again. A direct hit is not likely here. The best one can do is try different approaches to the same center when ever the opportunity arises" (p. 137). The instructor in this study exemplified

this quote in her feedback practices. She developed a multi-layer system of feedback to meet the challenge of time constraints and student diversity.

The instructor developed a hybrid method of feedback using symbolic, holistic, criteria-scale, oral, and portfolio methods of feedback and assessment to help students improve their writing. The mixed reaction of the students to different methodologies demonstrated the effectiveness of the system. Not one student in the study failed to find some aspect of this methodology that worked. The next step for the instructor should be to find out what works for each student and tailor the method of feedback to the individual student. Is this an impossible task? Perhaps given the time factor, but it is the probably the only method which will have an effective, broad-based impact on student responses to teacher feedback.

If a student responds well to the instructor's symbol system, then the instructor should continue to use it for that student. If it does not, it should be abandoned. One of the problems with the instructor's feedback method was its lack of recursiveness. The instructor did not consider past writing in her evaluation of new writing. Thus students implicitly began to treat each writing assignment as a separate task. Even though the instructor told students that they needed to make continuous improvement based on the results of their previous essays, she did not demonstrate the value of this by reinforcing it in her feedback practices. This is a common problem for writing instructors which could be rectified if feedback practices were recursive. The instructor did try to address this problem in her use of a portfolio, but portfolios are problematic because the necessity of revision is not

established consistently. The student does not make a concerted effort at reviewing and revising her past work until the end of the semester.

In this study, the main impetus for revision was an improvement in grades. Students liked the method for this reason but demonstrated no connection to the importance of revision. The instructor stated that her main reason for using a portfolio system was to give students the incentive to revise, and the portfolio method did have this affect, but students did not show a comprehensive understanding of how to revise or of how to use prior feedback to revise an essay.

Regrounding Feedback

Cohesive may be a more apt way of describing the distinction between effectively synthesizing theory into practice when creating an effective bricolage of diverse theories. Denzin and Lincoln, in commenting on researchers said, "The interpretive *bricoleur* understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and by those of the people in the setting" (p. 6). When establishing feedback practices, it is incumbent upon the instructor to consider all of the above. The instructor has to become an active research – not for the purpose of developing theory, but for the purpose of informing classroom practice.

Lincoln and Guba's said, "We may be in a period of exploring the ways in which our inquiries are both tied and untied, as a means of finding where our interests

cross and where we can both be and promote others' being, as whole human beings" (p. 185). In the developmental writing classes, success is incumbent on a holistic approach to teaching.

Teachers can no longer approach feedback from the position of the discipline if they are to begin improving student understanding of their feedback. Feedback is more about simulacrums than about approximating truths. A simulacrum is a tentative shifting view of reality. Approaching feedback methodology from this position allows an instructor to present for deliberation a shared view of the world. Feedback methodology in the classroom must be like pieces of glass in stained glass windows. Individually, each glass does have its own identity and its own purpose, but that identity and purpose of the individual must be tied collectively to form a cohesive picture, a picture which can be interpreted multiply by multiple subjects.

The infusion of subjectivity into inquiry has always been an unacknowledged presence. It foundational base as beginning of a continuous recursive act involving both student and teacher in open and equal communication cannot be established by adhering to the illusion of one objectifiable feedback methodology for all students. A monolithic feedback methodology excludes students especially those with the weakest skills. A subjective practice requires the teacher to constantly redefine the values informing his or her motivation and practice. Some might dismiss this idea as a form of relativism, a veritable diaspora of methodology and practice, but it may be the only way to practically assess student writing ability.

The problem is that for many teachers the process of redefining the foundation from which his or her feedback methodology proceeds is either assumed to be unnecessary, is done unconsciously, or is done without considering students. In order for meaning to occur in an interpretive act, certain conditions whether they be psychological, cultural, social or gender-based, must be considered if meaning is to be communicated . When two people come together and begin to communicate, a variety of forces come together to produce meaning. If those forces do not mesh in just the right way, then miscommunication occurs. This is the most common flaw in feedback practices. Miscommunication has occurred but neither party is aware of it. When a student approaches an instance of feedback, he or she mitigates the experience of that feedback with his or her own experiences. Often this process produces a feeling of disequilibrium until that moment when the person can begin to understand and interact with the feedback; this is moment of understanding and interaction is a point of departure. If the instructor does not in some way join in that interpretive moment and depart with the student, the teacher and student will begin to interact on different interpretive planes with perhaps severe consequences and most of the time the consequences have a more immediate and drastic effect on the students. If the planes of communication do not mesh, no method of feedback will be successful. Edward Said in Beginnings discusses how every act of communication (be it written or verbal) is both a beginning and a re-beginning because the subjects involved use prior knowledge to address a new experience. In an instance of

feedback, a re-beginning can only take place when both the student and teacher "are understanding" the purpose of the feedback.

The difficulty in interpret ting feedback for students and instructors lies in the fact that prior knowledge interferes with understanding. The moment of departure is a moment of synergy where the subject develops a working relationship with a text.

Disclosure is a fundamental necessity for presenting feedback, but it is not always practical or possible to do so because background and subjectivity interfere with any attempt to intentions or decisions. When an instructor makes a decision about a student's writing, it is necessary for them to forget other avenues of approach to assessing that writing momentarily. It is necessary psychologically and physically, but that decision and those avenues left behind will remain as traces in all further action. Those left behind avenues can then become artifacts, which others, particularly students, may unearth and interpret differently, and they may become points of departures for others. If the point of departure leaves common ground, there will be dissonance between the student and the instructor.

Umberto Eco, in discussing semiotics, used a rhizome as a metaphor for the way signs work. A rhizome is a mass of interconnected tubers, and when one of the tubers is cut, the rhizome re-circuits things through other tubers. Eco believes that language works the say way. When there is a communication block in a system of signs, meaning is re-routed through a "new tuber." Feedback must be viewed as a rhizome – a system of tubers that can still function when one tuber is blocked.

Most researchers reject the folk pedagogy of teachers as being invalid or unreliable because it is not sufficiently rigorous, but the problem is researchers are not always informed by the practical, and thus there findings and recommendations are not accepted or understood by those who might most benefit from it. If researchers conducted research in conjunction with the concerns and questions of the frontline teachers and administrators, the results of the research may be more relevant to actual practice. Perhaps, this is the greatest discovery of this case study. Research combined with practice can have an immediate impact on students if it is implemented into the curriculum of the course and if it is a constant, consistent methodology. Derrida's idea of a supplement seems appropriate here. A supplement is something that changes but does not erase something else. Most research, today, tries to erase the conditions that exist in classrooms. Is this practical or achievable? If research were used as a supplement – something which alters but keeps a trace of the original – then perhaps research would be more understandable and applicable for instructors.

Research must have a capacity for practical wisdom. Practical wisdom within a discipline and within life in general is not a new concept; it builds on the concept of "phronesis" advocated by Aristotle. In discussing the importance of rhetoric to good citizenship, Aristotle believed that all rhetoricians must have an ethical component, and he also believed that to be ethical one must exhibit phronesis. Aristotle defined phronesis as the ability of the rhetorician to make the right decision at the right moment. For a researcher, the ability to make the right decision at the right moment

can also have important consequences, and for an instructor this ability is critical to good feedback practices.

Aristotle said, "Practical wisdom involves an understanding not only of one's subject matter but also of the interest's of one's audience and the situation at hand" (trans. Kennedy, 1991). When the instructor does not consider audience or even the situation at hand, the results of his or her feedback is insular in that it is informed by personal motivation and a point of departure that does not consider other subjects. This is not to say that all such feedback will not be effective or will not be understood by students, but its possible success in getting students to improve their writing will be limited.

Neil Postman in The End of Education (1995) discusses the importance of having a god(s). He says that having a god offers a surety of being that allows a person to survive almost anything (1995). Postman expands his definition of gods to include narratives. He feels that narratives are an integral part of how people define themselves historically and socially. The problem with narratives begins when they are ". . . bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which – regardless of ultimate truth or falsity – become partially self-validating" (Bateson, 1972, p. 314 qtd. In Denzin and Lincoln, p. 19). The question is does this "net" of epistemological and ontological premises" are used validate a particular narrative, who is excluded from that narrative? In order for feedback to be valid it has to be accepted by the audience. Acceptance is not an either/or proposition. Acceptance is

a much more dynamic process. It has gradations and shades and is voluble only when those gradations and shades are allowed to play across subjects.

In this case study, feedback became exclusionary when it only engaged the instructor or a limited part of the student. In order to open feedback to students, we have to recognize the way our epistemological and ontological stances inform our feedback. It is through these stances that instructors begin to form effective feedback practices and validate them, but that validation is only partially if instructors do not reach outside of themselves and make the subjective inter-subjective. Instructors must remember that, "We ask for revelations from others, but we reveal little or nothing of ourselves; we make others vulnerable, but we ourselves remain invulnerable" (Ruth Behar, 1993, p. 273 qtd. in Fine et al, p. 109).

Conclusion

Beginning is a difficult moment for everyone especially when there is an element of uncertainty between the subjects involved in the moment of beginning. In the initial act of beginning, a subject propels forward part of her being and in that propelling all sorts of ontological and epistemological questions entwine her being. Questions are often left behind in the interrogative stupor which rises from the struggle to know. The abandoned questions are not forgotten though; they cannot be purged from a subject's memory. There are always traces of those unanswered questions in everything that has evolved from that moment of beginning. A simple

desire to know something becomes an involved process complicated by variables stretched and elongated in an obtuse field of inquiry: the relationship between teach and student.

A student has to cope with a profundity of methods and subjectivities that will constitute the being of his or her existence in a college prep writing course. Sometimes the method and the subjectivities actually become the answers to those initial questions formed in the moment of beginning, in a moment of praxis between multiple subjects. Change comes from working the past into a derivation. That derivation is always supplementary to new questions and inquiries formed in the mind of students as they process their interaction with an instructor in a writing class. Olson and Torrance made the point that "In the written text, the linguistic form is the only clue to the author's intention" (p. 35)

Because of teaching load and other institutional demands, some writing instructors do not take the requisite time to carefully structure a curriculum which addresses the students' lack of comprehension of the teacher's feedback practices. This was not the true in the case. The instructor's infusion of feedback practices into the curriculum and her repetitious and consistent application of these feedback practices on every assignment had the greatest impact on student reaction to and understanding of feedback on the class writing assignments.

For feedback to be effective, it must be used as something other than an ancillary to instruction. It must be part of the warp and woof of the developmental writing curriculum and classroom practice. Feedback when it is ancillary to practice,

when it is simply an unexplained summative assessment cannot reinforce the abstract concepts upon which writing is based.

Thus, while some students may improve their writing skills simply through practice, they will not improve their knowledge of writing and most will only show marginal gains in writing proficiency. Most of the students in this study understood and accepted the instructor's feedback, and most but not all of these students were more likely to revise their writing and to show improvement than students who did not understand or did not accept the instructor's feedback on their writing assignment. There was no identifiable reason why some students were more receptive to instructor feedback than others. Background variables like race, gender, and classroom performance did not appear to affect student acceptance of support. Students who had expressed a dislike on a lack of interest in the class were both receptive and unreceptive of the instructor's feedback. Students on the survey and in the interviews who had negative criticism of the instructor's feedback were not definitively receptive or unreceptive to the instructor's feedback. The majority of the students had positive reaction to the instructor's method of giving feedback, and the students who had negative responses still benefited from the instructor's feedback.

This study demonstrated the dynamic interactions which take place in a college preparatory writing classroom. The interactions of students and the instructor were impacted by variables both extrinsic and intrinsic to the classroom. Student in responding to instructor feedback were struggling to make sense of their place in a different world – the writing classroom. The world of the writing classroom is

composed of multiple subjects at play in varying planes of understanding. Sometimes these planes converge; sometimes they diverge.

Varying forces impact the movement of these planes, and this study attempted to describe these forces impacted the planes of student teacher interaction.

Areas for Further Research

At the completion of this study, I realized that much more work remains to be done about the subject of college preparatory writing. This research has also exposed new avenues that need to be explored in greater depth. For example, the relationship between student attitudes towards the instructor and grades on writing assignments needs to be researched further. From the results of this study, it appears that students' attitudes were affected by their score. Students' attitudes towards the instructor and her feedback on writing assignments appeared to be influenced by grades. It would be beneficial to investigate how this impacts students' performance on subsequent writing assignments.

An addition, it would be beneficial to extend this study by including more instructors with different backgrounds. Being able to compare instructors with more or less experience, who are adjuncts, who have different ethnic, gender and socio-economic backgrounds would give a richer description of how feedback affects students. It would also be imperative to include administration in a study of this type

in order to include the perspective of a group who has an indirect but significant impact on the classroom dynamics.

This study has also how need for doing a more longitudinal study in order to track the performance of the participants in subsequent courses.
By doing so, the research can describe the impact college preparatory writing courses have had on their performance in college-level courses. Such a study would able to gauge the effectiveness of college preparatory instruction.

Further research is also needed on how background variables such gender, race, prior knowledge, past academic experience, learning styles, motivation, prior test scores, and socio-economic status affect a student's performance in college-preparatory writing courses. While it is difficult to control for such variables, describing how such variables impact student performance may help instructors to improve their teaching and feedback practices.

APPENDIX A

Student Survey

Teacher Feedback Survey

In order to make our teaching more effective, I would appreciate your taking the time to answer the questions below. Your responses will help us to improve the quality of instruction we offer to you. Thank you very much.

Name: **Teacher:**

Student Number: **Class/Section:**

Semester:

Part I
Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible.

1. How many times have you taken ENC 0012 – College Preparatory English II or ENS 1441-Advanced Writing for Non-Native Speakers of English?

2. What are your weakest areas of writing? (You may list more than one.)

3. What are your strongest areas of writing? (You may list more than one.)

4. Describe your initial reaction when you review the feedback your instructor gives you on a writing assignment.

5. Give examples of comments or symbols made by your teacher on your writing assignments that you do not understand. You may give more than one example, but please explain why you do not understand each of your examples.

6. Explain how your teacher's feedback helps you to improve your writing. Please be as specific as possible.

For questions 7-10 please respond be providing specific examples from your writing assignments.

7. In the space below, list examples of your writing instructor's grading symbols which are least helpful?

8. In the space below, list examples of your writing instructor's grading symbols which are most helpful?

9. In the space below, list examples of your writing instructor's comments which are least helpful?

10. In the space below, list examples of your writing instructor's comments which are most helpful?

APPENDIX B

Instructor's Grading Rubric

ENC 0012 (Curall)
GRADES FOR PORTFOLIO ESSAYS

Essays will be graded only if they have been completed according to instructions. Evaluations are based on standard criteria for judging college essays. Grades will be determined according to the scale below, using a standard 100-point system to arrive at a rating of *A* to *F*. The description below begins with a *C* paper because a grade of *C* indicates an essay which is satisfactory, meeting all of the basic requirements for an essay. The minimum passing grade in this course is a *C* because a student must be able to write a satisfactory essay in order to be admitted to the next level of course work in college composition.

The ***C*** essay

1. has an introductory paragraph which sets up the thesis of the essay,	15pts.
2. is actually about what the thesis statement says it is about,	15pts.
3. has details that support the thesis,	15pts.
4. is organized into paragraphs which are based on a division of the central idea into supporting ideas and a connection between details and main ideas,	15pts.
5. may have occasional sentence-level errors, but does not have errors that indicate a failure to proofread or an inability to control the basic grammar of standard written English.	
Total	75pts.

The ***B*** essay

1. has an introductory paragraph which sets up the thesis and leads into the body paragraphs, giving the reader a clear reason for continuing to read,	17pts.
2. is a very unified piece of writing in which all parts are related to the thesis,	17pts.
3. has very specific and concrete details (major and minor details),	17pts.
4. has a clear organizational pattern and appropriate transitions,	17pts.
5. has sentences which are varied and relatively free of sentence errors.	17pts.
Total	85pts

The ***A*** essay

1. has a well-developed introductory paragraph with a strong hook, which gets the reader's attention and draws the reader into the essay,	20pts.
2. is very tightly controlled by the thesis without being formulaic,	20pts.
3. has fully-developed body paragraphs with major and minor details that are very informative and/or give strong sensory images,	20pts.
4. has an effective organizational pattern and smooth transition,	20pts.
5. has sentences that are varied in structure and free of errors.	20pts.
Total	100pts.

APPENDIX C

Instructor's Error Checklist

Errors in Sentence Structure & Grammar

Sentence Structure

(1)Fragment

Run-on Sentence

(2)Fused Sentence

(3)Comma Splice

(4)Faulty Parallelism

Word Forms

Verb

(5) Subj.-Verb Agreement

(6) Standard Forms

(7) Consistent Tense

Pronoun

(8) Case Forms

(9) Antecedent Agreement

(10) Adjectives and Adverbs

(11) Comparative/Superlative

Errors in Mechanics

Spelling

(12) word structure, problems adding endings

(13) confusion of words that look and/or sound similar

(14) homonyms

Punctuation

Separators:

(15) Comma

(16) Semi-colon

(17) Colon

(18) Apostrophe

(19) Quotation Marks

(20)Capitalization

number of words

number of error # word #errors

APPENDIX D

Instructor's Syllabus

ENC 0012 College Prep English II
Session 1, 2001-02

Instructor: Marilyn Curall
Phone: 299-5000, Ext. 1418
E-Mail: mcurall@valencia.cc.fl.us
Office: 5-134
Office Hours: Mon., Wed., & Fri. – 8:00 - 10:00am;
Tues. & Thurs. – 9:00 - 10:00am; 2:00 - 3:00pm

Course Objectives

ENC0012 is designed to provide students with the opportunity to develop the skillsnecessary to succeed in college-level writing courses. These skills will include choosing suitable topics for essays; gathering and organizing ideas; and composing, revising, and editing essays which conform to the rules of standard written English.

Required Textbooks

Wordsmith: A Guide to College Writing by Pamela Arlov
A college-level dictionary
These Essays Don't Stink (a collection of sample essays by college-prep students)

Required Materials

A 1" binder to be used for preparing a writing portfolio
Blue examination booklets for essay tests
Standard loose-leaf paper for all assignments not prepared on a word processor
Blue or black ink for all in-class writing
A 3.5" computer disk for saving out-of-class essays

Course Requirements and Grades

At the end of this course, you will be asked to write an impromptu essay under testing conditions in order to demonstrate that you have acquired the minimum writing competency required for entry into Freshman Composition I. In other words, the exit exam for this course is an entrance test for college-level writing courses. This essay will be read and evaluated by two instructors in the English Department other than your regular instructor. In addition to passing the essay test, you must also

demonstrate your knowledge of the rules of standard written English through an objective (multiple-choice) test similar to the test which was used for placement into the college-prep program. YOU MUST PASS BOTH PARTS OF THIS STATE-MANDATED COMPETENCY TEST IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE. Considerable practice in writing and rewriting essays is absolutely necessary in order for any student to be ready to pass this exit exam. All assignments in this course are designed to prepare students to meet the standards by which the exit essays will be judged.

Each student will be required to maintain a portfolio of all writing assignments. The portfolio will allow us to assess your progress. Using a portfolio system, I will be able to evaluate work in progress using exit standards, but the final grade on your writing portfolio can be based on the level of competence which you have achieved at the end of the course. Revision is the key to success and good grades with this system.

If you pass the exit exam, then your course grade will be averaged as follows:

Working Portfolio (essays written during weeks 3-13)	30%
Display Portfolio ("best work"/revised essays)	30%
Lab/class attendance, participation in class activities, short quizzes on homework and class activities	20%
Final Exam	20%

In ENC0012, classroom instruction is supplemented with a lab which offers individualized instruction and opportunities for intensive skill-building practice. This lab (the Student Support Center in 5-157) is computerized so that students may work at their own pace on particular problem areas of English grammar and the mechanics of writing, but it is also staffed by college-prep instructors and professional tutors.

The lab is open Monday through Thursday from 8:00am until 9:00pm, on Friday from 8 until 2, and on Saturday from 9 until 1. It is an open lab, so students can have great flexibility in scheduling their lab time according to their individual needs and around changes in their non-academic schedules (on a seat-available basis, of course). Students are responsible for logging-in to the computerized attendance-tracking system, which will be checked weekly by the instructor.

The exact amount of time which a student spends in lab is also flexible and individual, depending primarily on individual progress in demonstrating competence with the rules of standard written English. Satisfactory lab attendance is one component of that portion of the student's grade (20% of the final course grade) which is based on homework and classroom activities other than major essay assignments and major tests.

Attendance Policy

Regular, on-time attendance is required of all students at Valencia Community College; therefore, students who are not able to attend class or to be on time may be officially withdrawn from the course. An excessive absence notification, the first step in the withdrawal process, will be filed for students who have missed three classes. Students who have difficulty attending class because of conflicts with their jobs or personal lives must resolve those conflicts in order to have any reasonable expectation of success with their college work.

Students who come to class late or leave early not only jeopardize their own education but also disrupt the educational process for their colleagues; therefore, it is better to not come at all if one cannot be on time or stay until the class has been concluded.

Classroom Protocol

A classroom is a space in which the distracting behaviors of one or two students can have a negative impact on the entire learning environment; therefore, distractions cannot be permitted. TURN OFF THE CELLPHONES AND BEEPERS BEFORE CLASS BEGINS.

Format of Writing Assignments

Essays written out of class can only be prepared effectively on a word processor.

Computers are available for all students in the MAC lab on the first floor of the LRC, and the computers in the English lab are programmed for word processing. The format that will be required for all essay assignments is a standard form which is required in most college-level writing courses. The primary features of this format were designed to be implemented easily when the writer is using a standard word-processing program.

All essays which are not typed must be written in ink on lined notebook paper (no paper ripped from a spiral notebook). Do not write on the back of the paper. DOUBLE-SPACE, allowing a wide margin on the right side of the paper.

Deadlines

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified date. Absence is not an excuse for late papers. Essays submitted late will be penalized up to one letter grade for each day past the due date.

Plagiarism

Academic honesty requires that all written work submitted by the student actually be the student's own work. No credit (a zero, not an "F") will be

given for any written assignment which is found to have been authored by anyone other than the student whose name appears at the top of the paper.

APPENDIX E

Student Permission Form

September 10, 2001

Dear student:

I am graduate student at the University of Central Florida. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a survey and a follow up interview in order to better understand students' reaction to teacher feedback on writing assignments in developmental writing courses. I am asking you to participate in this study because you are currently enrolled in a developmental writing course. The survey will take no longer than 30 minutes to fill out, and the interview will take no longer than 45 minutes. You will not have to answer any question you do not wish to answer. Your interview will be conducted in person and taped with your consent. Only I will have access to the tape, which I will personally transcribe, removing any identifiers during transcription. The tape will then be erased. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and your identity will not be revealed in the final manuscript.

There are no anticipated risks, compensation, or other direct benefits to you as a participant in this survey and follow up interview. Your participation in this project is not required; therefore, if you do not wish to participate, your grade or status in class will not be affected.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact me at (407) 299-5000 ext. 1421. My faculty supervisor is Dr. Thomas Kubala. Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the UCFIRB office, University of Central Florida Office of Research, Orlando Tech Center, 12443 Research Parkway, Suite 207, Orlando, FL 32826. The phone number is (407) 823-2901.

Sincerely,

Nicholas J. Bekas
Graduate Student
Educational Foundations
College of Education
University of Central Florida

_____/_____

Name Date

_____ I have read the procedure above and agree to participate in this study. I voluntarily agree to participate in the survey and the interview.

_____ I do not wish to participate in this study.

APPENDIX F

IRB Permission for Study

September 6, 2001

Nicholas J. Bekas
1800 South Kirkman Road
Orlando, FL 32811

Dear Mr. Bekas:

With reference to your protocol entitled, "A Case Study of Developmental Writing Students' Interpretation of and Response to an Instructor's Feedback on Their Writing Assignment." I am enclosing for you records the exempt, exempt executed document of the UCF IRB Protocol Form you had submitted to our office.

Please be advised that this approval is given for one year. Should there be any addendums or administrative changes to the already approved protocol, they must also be submitted to the Board. Further, should there be a need to extend this protocol, a new assurance of Protection of Human Subjects form must be submitted for approval at least one month prior to the anniversary date of the most recent approval and is the responsibility of the investigator (UCF).

Should have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 823-2901.

Please accept our best wishes for the success of your endeavors.

Cordially,

Chris Grayson
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

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Printed Name/Position/Title: Ph.D Professor of English

Organization/Address: Valencia Community College
1800 S. Kirkman Rd.
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Telephone: 407-582-1421 FAX:

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